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NOV 2012 ISSUE
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HOT COMICS PRICE GUIDE
DEATHMATCH
CHARISMAGIC
SHADOWMAN
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CYBER FORCE
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GHOST
TOP 100
MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE IN COMICS
FACE TO FACE WITH ALAN MOORE
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BCM #1 Introduction by Rich Johnston

November! The nights are drawing in. Americans are thankful for their country, celebrating with turkey, fireworks, and family. Brits are thankful a Catholic terrorist didn't blow up Parliament and burn his effigy on a bonfire. It's pretty much the same thing.

One thing that won't be on that bonfire are copies of Bleeding Cool Magazine #1. This is it baby! This is where it all begins. The zero issue in the summer was a trial, a test, to see how everything worked. Which is why issue 1 is three times the size and completely bug free. Apart from the delay, obviously. But, you know, you got it now.

So, yes! Top one hundred most powerful people in the comics industry (page 63)! You can start the argument by tapping in the URL on that page. Especially over why The Incredible Hulk and Superman didn't make the list. Seriously, do you know how much they can press?

One of the big surprises of the power list is, those of you who get the most signatures from the list actually on the magazine (that actually stand up to basic observation) can win yourself a massive load of comic books. Seriously, try doing that with an app. Print is totally the new digital. I want to see kids chasing Isaac Perlmutter down

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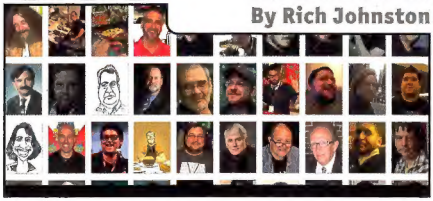

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the streets of Manhattan with this thing.

And then there's the Alan Moore interview (page 29). Part one! That's right, we're making you stick around for two issues to read the entire interview. It will be totally worth it, trust me.

And before you know it, it'll be Christmas. In December, I'll be telling you all the things you'll be looking forward to in 2013...

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LIFE IN THE GUTTERS

By Rich Johnston

So many comic book rumours and gossip revolve around comic book writers and artists. But there's so much more dirt to be found in the lives of editors and publishers. So welcome to this issue's blind items of industry gossip.

Which editor once entered the executive area at the comics publisher they worked at, and loudly declared that they had been having a gay sexual relationship with the editor-in-chief for many months, before then leaving the building?

Which editor was once beaten up in the office bathroom stall by the boyfriend of an assistant editor that he had shouted at previously in the office? The boyfriend just walked into the building past security...

Which boggle-eyed editor with a seriously full Human Resources file resigned from the publisher only to take a different job with the same publisher in a different office? And subsequently found their severely problematic file instantly wiped away?

Which wrath-like publisher was constantly caught with a famous artist in flagrante in a variety of places at the office by a number of different people, so that many thought the story was fictional because the details of where this had taken place kept changing with each telling?

Which editor saw himself dropped by his publisher after his work with a big name writer saw said talent decide to leave the comic after just one issue? Sadly, he wasn't a master of that universe...

Which iconic publisher was known to fit in a quick trip to the local brothel between meeting two of his writers in an unfamiliar city?

Which publisher, who everyone assumed was probably gay, shocked the entirety of the smoking section outside the Hyatt at Comic Con by successfully chatting up a buxom brunette of the female variety, then walking her up to his hotel room? The room was on the top shelf of the hotel, I think.

Which publisher... oh balls, it was Marvel's Bill Jemas... told writers to look to Star Wars to learn how to tell stories, start small and work big, like the opening scene with the two droids on the sand dunes of Tatooine. Only to eventually be told by an editor that Star Wars opened with a big space battle. The editor did not last long. Mind you, neither did Jemas.

Which Batbook creator tweeted something hideously inappropriate about choosing to kill fictional characters instead of going to see the midnight screening of The Dark Knight Returns, just before the news of the Aurora killings was made public? And then went to sleep while co-workers and colleagues desperately tried to contact them to remove it before the Drudge Report noticed?

Which Vertigo creator once bit Karen Berger on her behind at a comic convention bar, after scrambling around like a rabid dog?

Which publisher refuses to acknowledge openly that his publishing partner has not actually been with the company for two years now, after a massive split between the pair? And doesn't contradict people who still think it's a double act.

Which member of editorial staff was the unofficial procurer of narcotic supply for both editorial and talent at a variety of comic conventions, to such a degree that this person's absence is missed so much more than anyone else on staff? Listen at any bar at any con where this publisher is in attendance and you will hear their name mentioned mournfully.

Which publisher, going through a messy divorce, decided to share the epithetic-filled details with the entire bar during a convention, so that no one needed to leak the information to me, it was just assumed I'd received it.

Which editor, who seriously tied it on with the girlfriend of one of his freelance creators in front of him at a convention hotel lobby in full view of the industry, found it the last straw on his publisher's human resources file – almost? He was demoted, but remained in a very strong relationship with the editor-in-chief?

Which editor, now in a very senior position within the industry, sold licenses from his beach-front publisher and then pocketed the money coming in, using it to buy a rather nice house? Which he then had to sell once he was confronted with the news.

Which publisher was so incensed by finding dirty dishes in the office sink that he placed them on his desk and send an e-mail round to all editorial demanding that those responsible remove the dishes from his desk and clean them? Naturally, no one dared.

Which editor sent an insulting fax (okay, it's an old one) to a non-executive artist who had drawn a cover of a comic from a competing publisher? The fax consisted of the cover in question with the word "SLUT" written across it...

Which company used to specialise in firing freelance staff last thing on a Friday so there was no one in the office to take their calls for the weekend?

That's all the gossip that's fit to print... and probably some that isn't. Look for more juicy stories from my escapades at New York Comic Con coming up in Bleeding Cool Magazine #2. The whole city is full of gossipy comic people drowning their sorrows in Manhattan sports bars. Can't wait to share.

Got a tip for Rich? You can contact him, or any Bleeding Cool contributor, with story tips, comments, questions, or to ask about advertising at: ***BleedingCool.com/contact***

At the top of each article in Bleeding Cool Magazine, you'll find a shortURL that will take you to the online hub for that topic. You can use that link to share with your friends, or to join in the conversation at the Bleeding Cool online discussion forum: ***BleedingCool.com/forums***

DEATHMATCH
BLOND

WAXING DEATHMATCH – CREATORS TALK VERSUS WITH NO HOLDS BARRED

by James Kuhoric

"The Hulk would smash Superman."

"Ashley J Williams would send Jason Voorhees back to momma in pieces."

"Batman would make Chuck Norris' beard look like shredded cheese in a fight."

We've all heard it. These random conversations in the comic shop or convention where fans throw their theoretical versus challenges down and lay their very passion for fandom at stake in getting the support of their fellow reader to their side of the argument. It's a scenario as old as superhero comics themselves. But very rarely do we really get to see the outcome go beyond the "double dog dare" of the peer hazing ritual of the comic shop. And when we do see it in an issue or special, all too often it is a watered down story where no one really wins. In most cases it's not even in continuity – it's some "what-if-elseworld-amawhoogis" that really is just there to exploit a character's popularity or pander to a specific group's interest.

Not this time. BOOM! Has taken the call for a slugfest with brutal consequences and ramifications to heart and set up Paul Jenkins and Carlos Mango to tell a story that addresses the desire for a massive "mano-a-mano" without the licensing or big publisher restrictions on what can or can't be done to the characters. The result is Deathmatch – a "NCAA March Madness" style fight to the death spawning a new universe of characters and set in within the mystery of what is making this world's heroes and villains fight until the bitter end.

To get more on this upcoming new ongoing series, we've enlisted the help of Andy Lanning and Dan Abnett (of The Hypernaturals) to provide us with a round-table discussion about Deathmatch, The Hypernaturals, and Hostess Fruit Pies.

Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning talk with Paul Jenkins

Andy: I think where we should start is you have a new comic coming out from BOOM! Studios called DEATHMATCH. We've been teased with a little bit of information: the series is about a big group of superheroes trapped in a prison and pitted against each other in a fight to the death until only one survives. It's like The Hunger Games with superheroes! That's the one sentence pitch to the whole thing, but I'm sure you can give us a little more meat to that bone.

Paul: Yeah, I can elaborate on that a little bit. It's really interesting, because over time, I've done interviews with people and they've been really disappointed when they find out I'm not a massive fan of comics. I don't mean that to be a bad thing.

I love writing comics. I think they are a wonderful medium. I work in American comics primarily. And I'm sort of jealous that you guys get to do 2000 AD, to be honest. It's funny; I've had such a long career and never written for 2000 AD.

"It's like *The Hunger Games* with superheroes!"
– *Andy Lanning*

A I'm in the same boat as you, I've never written for 2000 AD.

P Oh, I thought you both had.

D an: No, it's just me.

P That's awful, Andy. That's an assumption on my part, but people have made a similar assumption about me, "Oh, you must have done 2000 AD." But the thing about 2000 AD is that you have the opportunity to create some really interesting stuff over there. And there are times here in the States, and I'm talking about primarily superhero comics, where you can and times where you cannot. If you go back to the Marvel Knights days, they just handed us the keys to the castle and said, "We really don't know what to do, go ahead, do whatever you want to do." And that's what made for really wonderful comics. That's the attraction.

I understand the fan appeal of DEATHMATCH would be, "Can the Hulk beat Superman in a fair fight?" They love that stuff.

A Argh, you just ruined one of my next questions...

(all three laugh)

P All that stuff is really fun. I'm not massive on it, but I will say that when we were talking about doing this, I gave three of the editors at BOOM! a little task. They're really smart guys; Matt Gagnon the Editor-in-Chief, Bryce Carlson the Managing Editor, and Eric Harburn, who's the Assistant Editor on DEATHMATCH. It was amazing. I actually made up a bracket, like the NCAA basketball or the FA Cup, and you line up the teams until there are only two teams left.

I literally lined up the characters I'd created and put them next to each other and said to the editors, "Why don't you guys fill out a bracket. Fill out who you think is in the final." It was really funny... Even though these were characters no one knew yet, suddenly these guys are debating at work. They said they had the most fun they've had in ages just sitting around saying, "I think this guy will beat this one." It made them think of all of these story ideas.

That's the benefit of doing a story like this, you can just imagine... who would beat who and why would they beat them? Does Batman beat Superman? That's probably the most talked about question. "I think Batman wins, because Batman is smart." "I think Superman wins, because it's sort of no contest to begin with." And those questions are fun for fans to answer.

Now, me — I really like to get into the characters. The DEATHMATCH scenario gives

you the platform to tell those cool character moments. And the final thing I was really high on was creating a new universe. You can see them from time to time in comics, something like ASTRO CITY that Kurt did. There weren't any rules for him to break, because he gets to say this character is in a wheelchair, and this one has this power, and once lost a fight to this character. No one can go back and argue with him. The idea of having a fresh new universe to create has been really nice.

D That's something we've been having a lot of fun with in our book, THE HYPERNATURALS. It's exactly that, you can create everything from the ground up and there are no preconceptions, no straight-jacket of continuity. Continuity can be a good thing, as well as a chain around your neck. If you are making your own continuity up, then you get to pick and choose whatever you want it to do.

A Exactly, it's extremely liberating. Will DEATHMATCH be an ongoing?

P That's the plan. The hope is that it will do really well and we'll build a nice coherent universe we can play in for a long time. It's up to the market to decide if they want it as an ongoing though.

A What is the world, the background setting that gives you the ability to set up these deathmatches?

P What I pitched really hard on, and they really liked, was that I don't want to finish this thing where there is a winner and then we go away. I want to create an entire world. We can look at the Marvel Universe and the DC Universe and they have their benefits, but it's occasionally driven me nuts. I've worked with editors where we're trying to tie in the continuity of a book from

Hypernaturals – BCM Hot Alert! - Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning reunited and doing cosmic comics at BOOM! Only, this time, they have no holds barred and a chance to tell the story of a retired group of heroes having to return to save the universe. If the *Hypernaturals* can take their Guardians of the Galaxy success a step further, it could be the next book flying off comic shelves and materializing into eBay treasure.

15 years ago. I asked BOOM! if we could make an entire world. So we are making like a new type of Astro City. We're going to make a world of this BOOM! universe. It is going to be populated by really interesting characters that have cool powers and relationships already with each other. In the first issue, we pit two characters against each other that truly love each other, but one of them has to kill the other one. Immediately you have great character interaction and relationships

Supurbia – Housewives of superheroes, backstabbing and gossiping, what is this, 50 Shades of Rich Johnston? Nope – it's Grace Randolph's super successful superhero version of "Desperate Housewives" back due to popular demand and now ongoing. This is the perfect break from the continuity heavy crossover events. Pure 100% guilty pleasure.

that are interesting to explore. We start with a mystery too: how are they here and why is everyone in this place? Why are they agreeing, once they get put in this arena; what is it that is making them agree to kill each other? There must be some reason and someone that is doing this to the characters. The whole thing is a big mystery.

A And is that a mystery you're planning on teasing out over the course of the series? As a subtext, or will you reveal the answer to the mystery quickly?

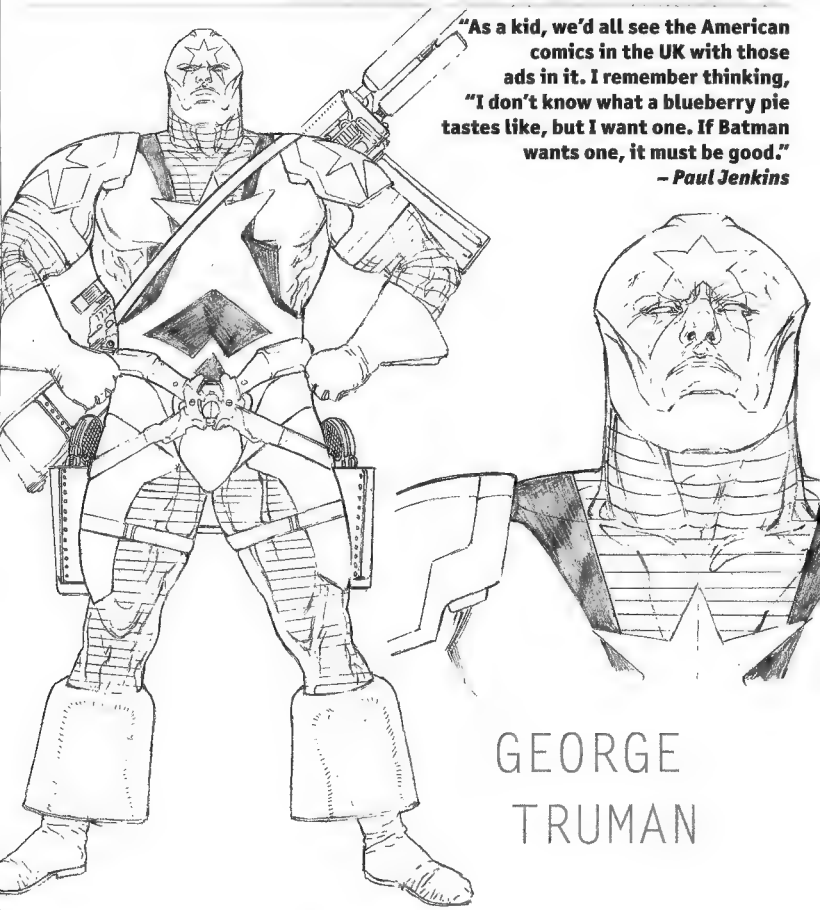
P The mystery is our main focus. There are good guys and bad guys and those in between. The good guys are called "supes" and the bad guys are called "fears" as in "superiors" and "inferiors." It's the supes versus the fears as well as those in between — the Rorschach and Punisher-type characters. The sort of extreme types that you don't understand, that you can't read. There's one character called The Glyph, that is a symbol character. It's a magician kind of character that uses symbols, very enigmatic, and you can't read it. There's another character that's kept in the basement and no one knows what it is, it's like the monster under the bed. We have potential for all types of things.

We follow the exploits of one main character who has arrived in the Deathmatch and realizes there's no way to evade it. Everybody's there asking, "How are we here? What happened?" How do you grab Superman and put him in chains? How did they even do this to us? So right away we get into the main mystery. That is the main focus of what is going on. The catch is, as they are trying to solve it, they are literally killing each other.

A Very cool. In THE HYPERNATURALS, we've made this world populated by scientific characters, because that's the cosmic genre we're dealing with. And to a certain extent, we wanted that universe to be a character in its own right in the book.

D Because, obviously, the more depth you put in, the more story potential you will get out of the world you've created. Have you found that yourself? Is that the heavy lifting of the whole process?

P You guys both hit on it. That was the exact thing I was having a conversation with the editors at BOOM! about the other day. I pitched a way of telling the story that



"As a kid, we'd all see the American comics in the UK with those ads in it. I remember thinking, "I don't know what a blueberry pie tastes like, but I want one. If Batman wants one, it must be good."
– Paul Jenkins

GEORGE TRUMAN

I thought was really interesting. It really revolves around bringing the world to life. We can all look at that first Batman film, the one with Michael Keaton, which I was always really fond of. That was really interesting casting by the way, you have to look at it in context of the time and go, "What?!" He did a really good job though. Anyway, I always thought Gotham City was one of the best characters in the story, right?

A Yeah, absolutely.

P So I was actually pitching this to them the other day, letting them know I need to add some things to the first script. I'm trying to add into it along the lines you were just saying. I'm trying to create backstories for these characters and then show them in an interesting way. We did this to

70s Watch - *Freelancers* brings the grindhouse to the comic shop. Two groovy chicks raised in a kung-fu orphanage take on the man in the superficial world of Los Angeles. Smart, sexy, fun, and guaranteed to have you singing the Shaft theme song. Yeah... can you dig it?

some effect a few years back in a book I did with Jae Lee — SENTRY. We suggested that the Sentry had been around for a long time. That Kirby and Ditko and Rob Liefeld must have drawn him and all these different people throughout comics' history were involved, creating an artificial background. For example, and this is a big fan service thing, we introduced the idea that one of the reasons the original Hulk series was canceled, was because the Sentry showed up in it, and we're not allowed to see that. And then we showed the old Hulk/Sentry stories and it was Hulk and Sentry versus the Lobster People. It was really fun to use those old story-telling methods to tell those stories. I think we're going to reprise that a bit in this book. I think we are going to show pivotal moments in these characters histories. Using comic book flashbacks so we can show that they've been around and had relationships with each other for a long time. It's a nice and convenient way of building the size of these characters and making the world an important character in the book.

Strangely enough to a degree, it's what we've decided to do in THE HYPERNATURALS. We have a six-page flashback sequence that kicks off every issue, drawn by different artists. It's a piece of an adventure, almost like an Indiana Jones-like pre-credit sequence, of another incarnation of the team showing one of their past missions. We have great ones coming up. It adds a layer to background to the characters and the world. We've also added little world-building text pieces in the back of each issue.

Oh, nice!

We're definitely ripping off GIVE ME LIBERTY and WATCHMEN in that respect. But also, Keith Giffen did it with his "Five Years Later" LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES run. He did these backmatter text pieces, which I always found fascinating and was a great way to immerse your readers.

Yeah, I'm trying to remember...that's something Alan [Moore] did with Rick Veitch too, wasn't it? What was the book they did where they had the fake Hostess Cake ads?

Yes! 1963, wasn't it?

PI think so. As a kid, we'd all see the American comics in the UK with those ads in it. I remember thinking, "I don't know what a blueberry pie tastes like, but I want one. If Batman wants one, it must be good."

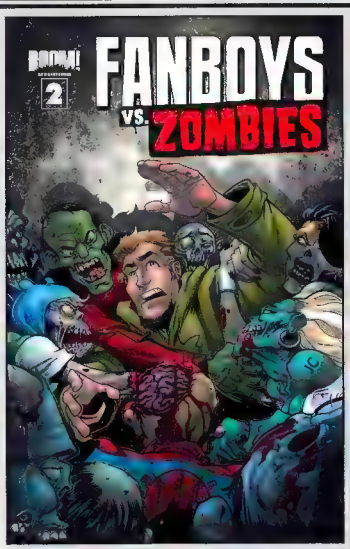
AI always wanted a Twinkie because of those.

PIt was the first thing I did when I came to the States, was to find Hostess blueberry pies and have one. They're awful!

(all three laugh)

DThat's the last thing you ever did from a comic.

PYeah, I did it once. I'll never do that again! Anyway, I think they did fake ads and that was so much fun to pore over. That was the experience of reading those comics; it was part of it. Even those ads were interesting. Anything we do that evokes the memories of those old comics is really interesting, if we're doing it to say our world has existed for a while. That's the challenge.



Fanboys vs Zombies – Sell me in a sentence – "The Zombie Apocalypse breaks out at San Diego Comic-Con." That'll do, pig. That'll do.

We're trying to point out to people that this has existed before, so they get invested in it.

There's a definite balance between trying to sell to an audience that is being shown so many comics these days to choose from. To show them a great new idea that they want to be attracted to, but convince them that it has the same sort of depth and breathing space as a comic that has been around for a long time. That has the weight of that continuity backing it up, because that's reassuring. Something that has been around for a long time must be good, because it has endured, right? We both seem to have had the idea that you need to not just create your world, but create your world's history in order to invite people and show them that this is pretty well worked out. You're not going to smell fresh paint everywhere you walk. These are characters with histories.

The other thing — and I wonder how you guys dealt with this challenge, because it's a fun challenge — in my world, I literally made up brackets with 32 superheroes and villains. In between killing each other until the last one is standing, the question is: why? What's happening to these people? They've already solved the mystery and they are still killing each other. But I wanted to make a world that had a past. The thing that is difficult, but I love, is "What can we do that's different?"

I want to do different not just for the sake of different; I want to do different and interesting. Maybe to illustrate this example,

think about how they created Daredevil, he's a guy who is really able, but has a disability. I followed that a bit with the Sentry, where he's essentially Superman but is schizophrenic. He became his own worst enemy. That was a good disability, because it built suggestions into story. I have a new character in DEATHMATCH called Dragonfly. He has this power, where he can fly between buildings, like a dragonfly flits between flowers, but for one minute at a time. So he can fly for one minute, but as he's flying if he doesn't touch something on the ground that's grounded, then he loses his power of flight and falls to his death.

Why? Because I could create a character like that. The idea of being able to create new things is really cool. Really great. Did you guys approach it that way or go with the story first? Rather than trying to create completely new powers and so on?

No, we did. Obviously, what we're doing is a cosmic book and it follows along the lines of what we did on LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES for DC and GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY for Marvel, where you have a team book in a futuristic environment and all the cosmic trappings that go with that. So we definitely wanted to play with that legacy and just invent an environment where those characters could function and make it really interesting. One of the good examples would be Thinkwell, a character that can literally draw in the air and create quantum mathematical impossibilities. He's the super scientist, but he literally writes on the world around him as if it's his own blackboard. And we just came out punting with the idea of this character. So, sometimes, it's just a riff on a classic type of character you can play around with.

See Bleeding Cool Online for the full interview with Paul Jenkins, Dan Abnett, and Andy Lanning!

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SHADOWMAN: The Magic is Back

An Interview with Patrick Zircher and Justin Jordan

THE MAGIC IS BACK
by Keith Davidsen

When Valiant resurrected its pantheon of heroes this summer, one of its most beloved characters was noticeably absent: Jack Boniface, the supernatural champion known as Shadowman. By the light of day, Boniface celebrated the cultural history of New Orleans as an aspiring jazz musician… but by night, he was a man possessed, a violent avenger prowling the dangerous alleys and tombs for human and inhuman evil.

Beginning in November, the creative team of Patrick Zircher (Captain America, Thor: Ages of Thunder) and Justin Jordan (The Strange Talent of Luther Strode, Team 7) welcome fans back to the Bayou with Shadowman #1, the fifth ongoing title in the revived Valiant universe.

But who is this Jack Boniface? With the Valiant universe redefined for a new era, how will Shadowman differ from previous incarnations? Zircher and Jordan provide their insight into what we can expect from this dark hero.

Valiant made a very deliberate decision to launch with four core titles: X-O Manowar, Archer & Armstrong, Bloodshot, and Harbinger. While each is grounded with a very human story, they cover a wide range of concepts. What do you consider to be Shadowman's unique contribution to the mythos?

Jordan: Magic. What we open up is a whole new corner of the Valiant Universe to play in. We're bringing the supernatural into the world in a way that's consistent with the mechanics and tone, which I think is fairly cool.

Zircher: We shake the cobwebs off magic as you usually see it in comics, and weave it into a modern world. Instead of spells from the mouths of wizards, you're as likely to see them fire from the barrel of a .357 magnum!

In the classic series, Jack Boniface would assume the Shadowman identity after sundown, a supernatural transformation of personality and physical prowess. His heroic alter-ego was unruly, impulsive, and violent. Will his conflict of personality be a facet of the new series?

Well, that struggle is what the series is about, at least on the theme level. Jack and Shadowman aren't quite the same creature here, and there's a certain amount of tension. Jack, as a whole, is struggling with what he is expected to be, what he wants to be, and what he is. So that aspect of the character is, if anything, emphasized here.

It's an aspect of the classic run that we want to stick with. When Jack becomes Shadowman, it's a shared presence, a presence that wants to amp things up —whether Jack's ready for that or not.

The new Shadowman has a significantly different appearance than his past incarnations. He first appeared in nearly solid blue spandex, donning a mask. His design later evolved, reflecting the heroic tradition less and street fashion more (a la black jeans and tank top). What were you trying to capture with the new design, and what aspects of the prior costumes influenced this version?

We definitely wanted something that was both visually striking and kept the best elements of the old character designs.

Elements of the original design are present. Shadowman has one of the best costume emblems in comics and I wouldn't change that for the world. I just moved forward with the rest as if the original costume had evolved throughout the series. When designing, I hope the idea is exciting, but also works for every artist drawing it, regardless of their style. When I saw Dave Johnson's more animation-style variant cover, I felt I'd hit that mark.

In the promotional artwork for November's Shadowman #1, we see him brandishing weapons, including a mean-looking scythe. Will he have a set arsenal or trademark weapon?

We didn't want to bring Valiant characters back without adding to them, and the scythe, which is modeled on the Sengese blade of West Africa, fit the feel and appearance of Shadowman to a tee. Still, we want to introduce these things with logic in mind, not just for effect.

He uses the Sengese blade (and it's not just a blade) a good bit, and that is a weapon with some history behind it. But Jack will use whatever will work on the threat at hand. Those pouches and belts aren't just there because we love Rob Liefeld.

Jack Boniface was a "legacy hero" following in the footsteps of an earlier Shadowman incarnation, Maxim St. James. Fans would recall that St. James fought evil in the late 19th century, and the two generations eventually crossed paths. Will the new Shadowman exist as a hero for Valiant's present only, or will the history of the character tie into the shared past of the universe?

Jack is a legacy hero. You get to see his immediate predecessor really, really quickly in the book (the first page) and we'll be referencing and showing you some of the others over the course of the series. The second arc will show you a lot about the Shadowman legacy. And expect some crossover with immortals of the Valiant Universe!

There are just enough characters lurking in the far past at Valiant that I'd love to read a team-up story set about 100 years ago.

Personally, I've always felt that Master Darque, Shadowman's nemesis, was the most intriguing and diabolic villain in comics. Will he return in the new series, and if so, how would you describe his new incarnation?

Yup, he's the main villain of the series, at least for the first few arcs, and you get to see him very early on. Personality-wise, he's a man who considered himself beyond good and evil, and he may actually be right. He has a goal and it's a noble one, but whether that justifies what he's willing to do, well, that remains to be seen. But what he does early in the series sets in motion many of the events that follow.

Many of the best villains are interesting, and frightening, because they don't see themselves as villains. They do extreme things because that's how they get things done. For Darque, "The end justifies the means" is his maxim.

A recent Valiant press release indicates that Jack will face "an army of unspeakable monstrosities from beyond the night." What can you tell us about this invasion?

There are nasty, nasty things out there, and they'd love to snack on Jack Boniface. But the invasion ties into what Darque is trying to do, and why the Shadowman was created in the first place.

There there be monsters! We want to run the gamut of stories, both large and small... but mostly large!

Michael LeRoi, the third Shadowman, originally assumed the mantle following Boniface's gruesome death in the previous Shadowman mythos. Has the LeRois incarnation and storyline influenced the direction of the new Boniface series?

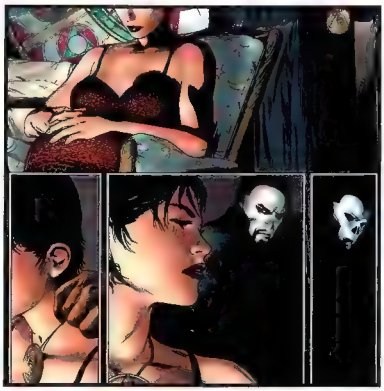
One of the big advantages of doing a reboot like this is that we can pick and choose from the best parts of all versions of the character. There are things about the LeRoi version that we really liked, and you'll see them here. The big example is that the Deadside exists and Jack has ties to it.

I admit I'm partial to the earlier stories, but the Deadside is a gift, a really cool concept! It's the shadow that Shadowman slips into, but it's more than that.

The classic Shadowman had a rich supporting cast. The most prominent figure was elderly voodoo practitioner Mamma Nettie. Other memorable characters included the vampiric seductress Lydia, and Sandria, Master Darque's tragic and haunting sister. Will we see a return of familiar characters to the cast of Shadowman?

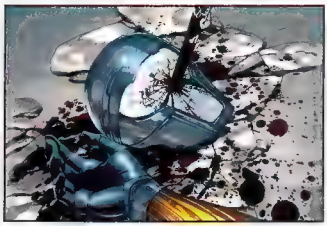
Sandria figures into the mythology of the series very, very strongly, and we have plans to introduce a lot of characters that long time readers will recognize. Some of them are going to be pretty close to their original incarnations, and some of them have changed pretty radically.

At the same time, we're developing new characters for the series. In the first issue, you'll meet the Abettors, Jack's allies. There are at least four new characters in the first issue alone that you'll see again. I want Shadowman to feel like it takes place in a world where stuff is happening even when the reader isn't looking at it, and the supporting cast is a big part of that.



Shadowman isn't the only one making waves in the new Valiant universe. Here's a look at the upcoming story arcs coming straight from the publisher!

X-O MANOWAR #5 - #8



X-O Manowar has landed on Earth, and now the world's most lethal intelligence agent has a new target. But who is the operative known as Ninjak? And who – or what – has marked Aric of Dacia for death by his blade?

HARBINGER #6 - #10

After an epic confrontation with Peter Stanchek and Toyo Harada, the Valiant Universe's first team of heroes is setting out to dismantle the Harbinger Foundation! With Kris Hathaway and Faith "Zephyr" Herbert at his side, Peter's about to awaken his own secret group of super-powered resistance fighters, beginning

Z Justin and I both think supporting casts are hugely important. We love writing them. They imbue feeling and bring in additional personality. We want readers to find them as essential as the main character himself.

How long have you been working on the project? What were the themes that you really wanted to explore with Shadowman, or concepts introduced into the larger Valiant picture?

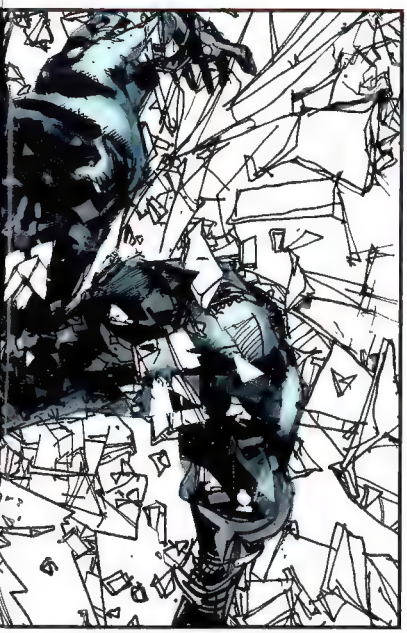
J We've been working on it since....man, I honestly don't know. April, maybe? I know the first draft of the first issue was done by June 1st, so maybe even further back than that. I suck at keeping track of time.

Thematically, I was interested in exploring what it means to have power,

responsibility, and a legacy handed to you when you had no idea it existed, and whether we can swim against the tide of the history that came before us. Jack was searching for his past and his place in the world, and I thought that'd be interesting.

I also wanted to write about a dude who could walk through shadows, speak to the dead, and punch monsters... but I'm not sure that qualifies as a theme!

I am all about punching the monsters! We want to infuse a high-adrenaline book with human qualities. In addition to Jack coping with his legacy, we want to explore what it's like for Jack to have a doorway to looser inhibitions, to the wild night, open before him, which is probably another reason we love that logo of Shadowman in the doorway.

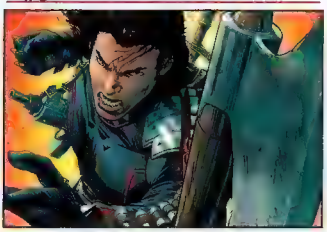


with a hot-headed New Orleans stripper named Charlene Dupre...

BLOODSHOT #6 - #10

Bloodshot has finally cornered the man with the answers to his past–rogue Project Rising Spirit scientist Dr. Emmanuel Kuretich–and he's just been pitched a devil's bargain. "Kill your creators, and I'll reveal everything." Well, almost everything...

ARCHER & ARMSTRONG #5 - #8



No one in the Valiant Universe is more dangerous or experienced in the art of war than the undying Eternal Warrior. But now he has a new mission: destroy young Obadiah Archer, Armstrong's best-est new buddy and teammate in the war against The Sect.

CYBER FORCE
MARC SILVESTRI
MATT HAWKINS
KHOI PHAM
SUNNY GHO
TOP COW'S BEST-SELLING SERIES BREAKS NEW GROUND
ISSUES #1-5 ARE FREE / OCTOBER 2012
Image
TOP COW

CYBER FORCE

1

MARC SILVESTRI • MATT HAWKINS
KHOI PHAM • SUNNY GHO • SAL REGLA • STJEPAN SEJIC

CYBER FORCE FOR FREE

by James Kuhoric

Everyone loves free comics. That's why Free Comic Book Day is such a success and, to some extent, why digital comic book pirating still operates online. Free is the right price to get a potential fan to try a comic and determine if they want to shell out their hard-earned cash on it for the future. It's the ultimate taste test, only you don't want to actually lick the paper in this case. Well... at least not in public.

This summer, Top Cow did something somewhat revolutionary for one of the top comic publishers. They decided to launch a campaign to bring back Marc Silvestri's Cyber Force in a way that makes the old Coke or Pepsi taste tests pale in comparison. Through a Kickstarter campaign, they were able to raise over $100,000 to develop, print, and give away the first five issues of the new series to fans. The intent was to create a scenario where comic shops could literally give away full sized printed comics to their customers and let the fans decide if they want to continue beyond the nearly half-year of free content. In theory, that should benefit everyone – retailers will be able to give away content and potentially grow customers for the series, fans can read and collect the first five issues with no financial investment, and Top Cow is able to reinvent one of the original Image properties for a new generation of fans without pinning their success on how well a new first issue would do under the normal constraints of distribution. It's a bold idea and one that certainly had its share of risk even in the planning stages, starting with the possibility of the Kickstarter failing and not be funded. But the cybernetic-gods have smiled upon Silvestri and company, giving them the chance to introduce this new iteration of Cyber Force in grand style.

So just who is this new team? Are we talking about the same group that premiered in 1992 when Image Comics was in its infancy? According to Silvestri, this is a "reboot origin story in the truest sense." He went on to add, "The simple idea of Cyber Force is that technology runs amok, but it's the nuance and subtleties of human/technological co-dependence that really drives the story."

In the first issue, there is no Cyber Force. We literally go from step one in the genesis of this tale with new and old elements coming together to reveal the creation of the team. Silvestri describes the new team as "Bio-Cybernetic Steampunk," and explains how some of the traditional aesthetics of the bio-mechanical look have been tweaked to create something new.

"One of the things when designing a world is to try to deliver something that hasn't been done, or at least not done to death," Silvestri explained. "As an artist, I'm somewhat constrained by my own style, but that doesn't mean I can't do something that, although identifiable as mine, can't still be fresh."

Silvestri also notes the new series will be "deeper in character than the original ever was," and there are more characters fans will really connect to. In their preparation for the series, the publisher sited George RR Martin's Game of Thrones as a benchmark for "building an epic story without losing the drama or intimacy of a smaller scale tale."

Fans of Silvestri's work welcome the idea of an epic story with characters more substantive and intricate than those of the original run. Critics who have drawn parallels to the similarities between original cast members and existing Marvel characters were vocal about the original comic building upon strong visuals more than story content. From the look of the story bible for the new Cyber

Force universe, those criticisms appear to be a thing of the past. This new incarnation is drawing on a complex architecture for the world, multi-faceted personalities for the characters, and a fresh take on Silvestri's always sharp character designs and art.

For all the editorial changes on Cyber Force, Top Cow understands the cornerstone of their potential success falls squarely on the shoulders of the direct market's comic book retailers. Without the support of the local comic shop, the program won't have the venue to engage readers and use its unique approach to building a fan following. Silvestri is very aware of the crucial retailer component saying, "the retailer is VERY important to us... we couldn't do this without their help." Top Cow is hoping this innovative free comic approach will bring the readers into stores, which should help introduce potential fans to a host of other books. Retailers are smart and savvy business people that tend to look at their opportunities one book at a time. They have to bear the cost of shipping to obtain the free books and hope the goodwill and exposure they gain by offering it to their customers will create future opportunities to sell Cyber Force in their shops. It's a gamble, but one that appears primed to pay off if the first five issues can hook readers to the revamped world and characters. The real measure of success will be whether or not new (non-Witchblade/Darkness) readers will try the series, and if they will buy into the rest of the Top Cow universe once they are in the fold.

Top Cow's Cyber Force #1 came out in October and has many wondering how the free comic book strategy will work toward building a dedicated readership once the books go back to normal pricing. Marc Silvestri was one of the first to break away from Marvel and DC to help establish Image Comics. 20 years later, he seems to once again be the first to break away from traditional publishing and marketing with this unconventional approach to building a fan base for Cyber Force. The questions on everyone's minds are - will the book itself be as good as everyone hopes it can be, and will the free strategy stand up long enough to gain the readers needed to make it a success? Rest assured, retailers and other publishers will be very interested in learning the answers.

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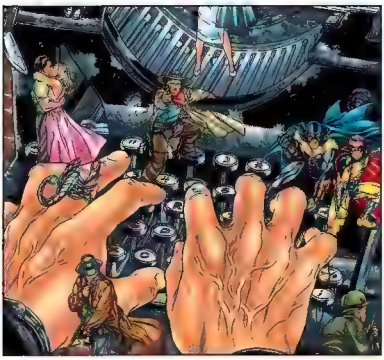
MODERNIZING LOVECRAFT: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH ALAN MOORE

By Adi Tantimedh



Herbert Philips Lovecraft is arguably the most influential horror writer in the history of English Literature. Virtually every horror writer and filmmaker from Stephen King to John Carpenter to Ramsay Campbell to Neil Gaiman to Guillermo Del Toro cite his work as a major influence on their own work and way of thinking. The handful of horror stories he wrote created a mythology of a dangerous cosmos filled with creatures older than time lying in wait to return and devour the world has been taken up and copied endlessly by other writers and filmmakers for decades after his death, up to the present day. The prospect of adapting Lovecraft's novel AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS into a movie is considered a cinematic Holy Grail by filmmakers and horror fans alike.

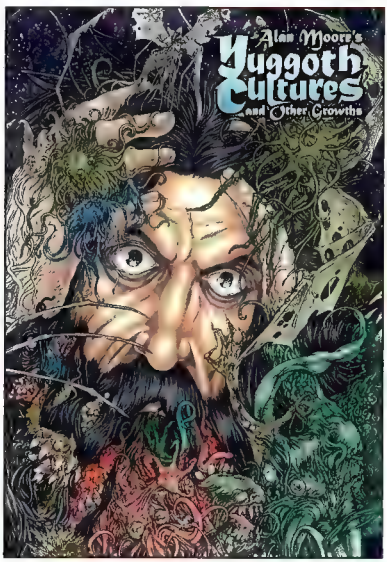
Alan Moore is one of the latest in the line of writers to tackle Lovecraft's mythos, but what sets THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON apart is the degree to what he deconstructs and updates Lovecraft's themes and preoccupations to the 21st Century and also faces head-on many of the subtexts inherent in Lovecraft's stories that the author himself never confronted directly.

ON HORROR

Suffice to say, Moore takes the horror genre very seriously. To him, it is not a frivolous form of storytelling for cheap thrills and reassuring endings as Hollywood likes to sell it these days. He has studied the history and origins of horror and its primal appeal.

"Horror is a genre that I personally haven't really explored since I was working on SWAMP THING. FROM HELL could be said to be a horror narrative but also several different kinds of narrative as well. Generally, I tended to assimilate the various tropes and elements of the horror genre into my work in general. I think that there's a general tendency for me to see Reality as a mash-up of all of these different genres, but that doesn't take away from the fact that genres do exist and have these traditions. Horror is obviously an incredibly potent genre. It obviously plugs into something very primal in the human condition and a lot of the most ancient myths are essentially horror stories, with horrible physical mutilations and terrible fates and dooms, so yes, it's obviously an important genre. I think it's very interesting, because by looking at it, we can tell an awful lot about ourselves and what frightens us. We can, for example, perhaps draw several general vague conclusions about our horror material. Since we are largely urbanized in the present day, you will find that most of our sources of horror are, in the narrative sense, in the rustic. We have made the countryside into a place that is to be feared because it is full of hillbillies dressing up in their victims' skin and naming their children after planets. That's one of the things. Anything that is Other to us is generally a source of horror. I think in the present day, Horror is serving a different function. I would say that what's happened is – I can look at Horror and I can see it as an evolution, a strange evolution from Graveyard Poetry.

Graveyard poets were originally writing for religious reasons. They were talking about the mortality and decay that were a regular part of churchyards back then when bodies would not rest in the graves forever. They would rest until the flesh had been eaten from the bones and then the bones would be left around the churchyard. I think there's a part in Henry Fielding's TOM JONES where the various factions at a wedding party are throwing skulls at each other. This is not a surrealist note, this is what things were like back then. The graveyard poets were initially commenting upon how transient the world is and how glorious God is. But some of the later ones are kind of reveling in the bats, the owls, the skulls, and the tombstones. Then we cleaned up the cemeteries, ostensibly for hygienic reasons but psychological reasons as well. Where the stench of death would be everywhere, now it was sanitized. Now death was hidden from us, yet we still need to relate to that experience. And it's around the time of the Graveyard Poetry that we start to see the first Gothic writers emerging who would take all the tropes of Graveyard Poetry but they weren't bothered about showing the transience of existence. They just really dig all of the ghosts and spooks and all the rest of it."



"People don't go to watch a horror movie to confront their mortality or to think about the transience of worldly things. It's a kind of flirting with the unspeakable thing that we put behind the curtain. I think that is the function that Horror tends to provide these days. I would prefer that it didn't. I would prefer in dealing with Horror that it get back to its original potency, at least as I see it. The absolute... Don't dance with it. Confront it face-to-face. You know, what I try to do in my fiction."

ON UPDATING LOVECRAFT

Lovecraft's work exemplifies Moore's views on what Horror should be, and its central themes of dealing with The Other.

"Well, Lovecraft is unusual amongst horror writers in that, yes, it might be argued that he isn't a very good writer. That could be argued. I don't think that's a particularly valid or useful criticism, just as I don't think that painting or visual art are about one's drawing ability. I don't think that the literary arts are necessarily about one's writing ability. With Lovecraft, what comes across, as I said, a rarity amongst horror writers, is that he was genuinely frightened of all this stuff. He was reading astronomical journals and laying there at night with heart palpitations as he thought how horrifying the black distance between stars were, how tiny the Earth was, how insignificant in the vastness of the universe human life was. It was around that time, that turn of the century, the 19th-20th Century where we started to get a much fuller grasp of cosmology, and Lovecraft took on all of its implications, this loveless, vast,

inhuman universe that didn't even know we were here, and he embodied the cosmological terrors in his Great Old Ones, which are kind of abstract. They're abstracts of... all he could see is the uncertainties and the horror that Lovecraft was facing when he found himself facing the universe and its embodiments. And of course, Lovecraft was frightened of everything else as well."

One theme in both THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON is that acquiring forbidden or arcane knowledge is not a good idea. Understanding it won't save us. In fact, it might destroy you the more you know about it.

"Well, information in Lovecraft's world... I remember he said specifically, famously quoted that one of the greatest blessings of Humanity was that it could not assimilate all of its knowledge into one coherent form, but that day might be coming soon, and would Mankind embrace this new light of knowledge and information or would it flee from it into a new Dark Age, and I think that was kind of prescient. Looking at the spasm reaction of fundamentalism, I can see yet an impulse to revert to a new Dark Age, probably quite literally. And yes, of course there are those amongst us eagerly seeking the light of information who are waiting for the next Revelation. Lovecraft encompassed all of those, and of course, he was frightened of... he was xenophobic, at least in his early years. He was frightened, I think, of sexuality. I think he was even frightened of turning into a fish, because he suffered from poikilothermism, where you are basically cold-blooded, you're not generating heat. It's a perfectly normal condition... if you're a fish. Lovecraft would pass out in cold weather. And you can see this fear of the cold in all these stories from "Cold Air" to "At the Mountains of Madness." He was a most uniquely omniphobic individual. That's what comes across in his stories. Whatever limitations there might be in Lovecraft's writing style was more than compensated by the fact that the guy was clearly living this stuff. In a sense, this was his life. This was the interior of his mind unpacked into a few dozen tremendous short stories."

Moore had to admit that he wrote NEONOMICON in a particularly dark mood, one where he found himself owing money to the taxman and, like many writers in pulp fiction before him, having to write his way out of it.

"The dark mood was a sticky position with the tax people at that time where I needed some money and William had generously offered to fund where I wanted to write a four-part story, he would make a contribution to my tax deficit. I suggested that since I'd enjoyed the job that Jacen had done on THE COURTYARD, and I had at the time been vaguely thinking that there had been interesting characters, interesting scenarios that I'd brought up in THE COURTYARD that I wasn't sure I was done

with yet. It struck me that there might be a sequel to it somewhere in me. So when William suggested that I might do something in the horror line, because Avatar did a lot of horror comics, I understand, so that seemed like a good option. So when I wrote it, I could tell it was very black, very dark, quite savage, and that I wasn't sure how good it was."

It was, however, not a mere hack job where he would phone it in. He was determined to take the job seriously and tackle head-on the themes inherent in Lovecraft's work. It got to the point where even he was concerned he might have gone too far.

"I thought it was possible, because it was a very extreme story. It all felt completely justified while I was writing it, but after I'd done it, after I'd not looked at it for a few months, I was starting think, "Hmm, perhaps that was too nihilistic, too negative..." Then I saw the artwork for the first issue and I read it, enjoyed it, thought, "Actually this is really good," went back to read the scripts to all the other issues, and found that it was a really good, solid piece of work and it said what I wanted to say. As I was saying earlier, I don't like the idea of horror as a kind of palliative. I don't like the fact that we're living in a society where real-life horror is piling up in our newspapers, our television screens and on our doorsteps. And yet we are going out and getting, frankly, some sort of perverted, vicarious thrill out of watching teenagers being murdered because they had sex or because they were black or whatever the moral of these fucking films is. No, I would prefer to actually talk about what is horrible. So in that sense I think NEONOMICON certainly succeeded. I also wanted to talk about what is horrible in the context of H.P. Lovecraft, in the context of all of his phobias: his xenophobia, his misogyny, his fear of Sex. I wanted to somehow put all of these elements, which are usually abridged. They're smoothed over in talking about Lovecraft or discussing his work. All of the pastiches of Lovecraft omit them. What I wanted to do was to get back to H.P. Lovecraft and his very strange world, his very strange emotional world. So yeah, we're putting the racism back in, the anti-semitism. By making a female character the lead in NEONOMICON, obviously I'm taking a huge step away from H.P. Lovecraft, and knowingly so. You know, what would a female protagonist do in Lovecraft's world? I was also interested in not being coy in the way that Lovecraft in naming the Nameless Rituals, talking about the strange inter-breeding that runs through Lovecraft's work. I mean, you've constantly got degenerations. This is because Lovecraft... his mother was unbalanced, possibly schizophrenic. His father, I believe, had died of syphilis, and Lovecraft feared he had hereditary syphilis. This is why you've got these dynasties degenerating in "The Lurking Fear." Or people born of some sort of unutterable union between a human and an ape like Arthur Jermyn. But Lovecraft never talked about that because he was so squeamish about sex. But it's there in all his work. So I decided to just go through this and expose it, take it all in the world that existed in THE COURTYARD,

the world where Lovecraftian Horror is a real thing where these things actually exist, and let the story play itself out from there. There were some concerns. I was thinking about the fact that Cthulu is the most humanoid of all the Great Old Ones. He's supposed to be the boss of the Great Old Ones, and yet Yog Sothoth is a number of blazing spheres, Azathoth is a kind of galaxy-wide nuclear explosion, at least some of the time, Nyalethotep is a crawling chaos with a three-globed burning eye... Cthulu has arms and legs. And wings. Two eyes. So that was at the back of it as well: why is he the most humanoid? So the story just provides for Lovecraft continuity freaks, you know? I was very pleased with the way it came out. I think that it brought H.P. Lovecraft into the present day. It opened up different areas and it didn't flinch away. I mean, of course I felt incredibly uncomfortable writing a two-issue-long rape scene. Of course it would have been so much easier to cut away and perhaps let the reader work out what had happened in the way that Lovecraft would have done. But I didn't want to do that. I know people that have been raped. You can't cut away. With what's going on, you can't cut away. You just have to deal with it. There's a next panel, and a next panel, and a next panel. That's what I wanted to say. I didn't want to treat rape in a way that comics normally do. I didn't want to have Conan pushing some 'spirited' dancing girl back into the hay despite her protests because "she wants it, really" and afterwards she'll be smiling in satisfaction. I didn't want that kind of sanctified rape, and I didn't want the kind of rape where a rape happens to justify the male hero going upon a revenge spree. I didn't want any of that stuff. I wanted something that would put the reader in that horrible space and make them think about it, that hopefully would illicit genuine horror rather than titillation. I think I completely succeeded."

The most controversial part of NEONOMICON, then, was the depiction of the heroine's rape and how she survives and transcends it, in a manner that is more feminist than most stories.

"Well, I've talked to people about these things. I understand you really have to, and that normalizing the situation, attempting to normalize the situation is part of it. You got to get by. You can just be screaming and in paroxysm of horror. You can't do that, that's not how we work. There's a point where you have to stop screaming and deal with it. Yes, that was something that I wanted to show in my story."

You could say Merrill Brears' ability to deal with her ordeal is ironically positive, since she faces it head-on, but there is a price to be paid.

"Yes. There's very little positivism in the story. At the end, the heroine's triumph is to be gladly awaiting the destruction of humanity. That she feels no kinship for."

Horror has always been seen as a more subterranean, almost disreputable genre, unlike the thriller or detective genres, though in the mainstream, Hollywood

studios and book publishers are more than happy to make money off its promise of shock and transgression.

"In the mainstream, the way that Horror is treated largely is reactionary. Stephen King made a statement that I don't think he intended to be reactionary, but he was saying the horror always comes from outside. That's not of all horror writers. It isn't true of say, Ramsey Campbell, one of the very best British horror writers. I think that the English take on this is "The horror is already here." It's already here, it's us, it's indoors with us all the time. It's not coming from outside. Ultimately, yes, there is a monster in NEONOMICON, but it's by no means the least sympathetic character in the book. I mean all those human orgiasts... they're disgusting. You'll find them at any orgy, I'm sure. At the end of the day, the big scaly monster is just doing what big scaly monsters do. It's just being completely true to what it is. It's not evil. It's just a thing with drives and easily exploited. I wanted to leave people with lots to think about in this one, and I think it might have succeeded."

THE EVOLUTION OF TWO BOOKS

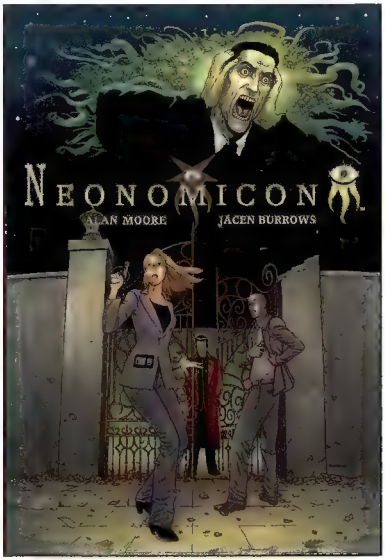
THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON are really two halves of a single story, reflecting off each other thematically and structurally. That is why they are being published together here in one collection.

"That's probably true, yeah. One grew out of the other. Considering that NEONOMICON was originally part of the projected YUGGOTH CULTURES, where I'd just be taking a sample from each of the poems in "Fugi from Yuggoth," including "The Courtyard" and the original story THE COURTYARD just grew out of H.P. Lovecraft's poem "The Courtyard," which is bodies without heads or hands... Yeah, it was a kind of taking a piece of the original fungi and growing it into a little culture, then I suppose NEONOMICON is like taking it further, sort of a little sampling of it and putting that into another petri dish."

However, Moore never completed YUGGOTH CULTURES prose collection after writing THE COURTYARD, and his ideas eventually evolved into NEONOMICON.

"Well, what happened was, I was originally just responding to David Mitchell's request for contributing something to his THE STARRY WISDOM anthology. I thought that maybe I could just do a little piece based upon each of the twenty or thirty poems in the original "Fugi from Yuggoth." So this was going fine until I left most of them – the only copies – in the back of a taxicab, which meant the original idea for the project was lost beyond retrieval apart from the bits that turned up in the Avatar titles. All of it was lost except for "The Courtyard," which was probably the one piece in it that would stand out on its own. So I just handed that in as my submission to THE STARRY WISDOM.

It was longer than the other pieces in there, but I put any ideas of finishing off "The Fugi from Yuggoth" out of my mind then. But I was quite taken with the scenario in "The Courtyard," so that had been at the back of me mind for a while... I was interested in the Aldo Sax character and I could see a kind of vague scene at some point in the future after the events of "The Courtyard" that he'd be in a mental home that some FBI agents would go over to interview him to try to find out what happened to him, and that it could all kind of spin out from there. So yeah, when William suggested some kind of hundred-page horror piece for Avatar, that seemed to be the most natural basis for the story."



THE COURTYARD and NEONOMICON mirror each other in that the protagonists are people with flaws and problems in their pasts. Aldo Sax, who had mental problems to start with, and Agent Brears suffers from sex addiction. This sets her up specifically to be the main character in NEONOMICON. Moore was not familiar with some studies that doctors and psychiatrists have done in the United States that found many sex addicts were people who had suffered rape or abuse in their pasts as far back as childhood. This rewires their brains to the point where the addiction is a kind of attempt to regulate or control the trauma, but then they often end up re-traumatising themselves in the process.

"I had not actually read that, but that does fit in with what I kind of intuited. I mean, there's a line that I give to Merrill Brears when she's talking to Agent Lampert. He's slightly offended that he's not her type when all sorts of other people including Perlman at the Bureau had been her type, and she's explaining that, 'It's not about liking men. It's about hating me.' It's the self-esteem thing. The reason why, it just suddenly occurred to me when I was writing the first issue that that would be interesting, because, as she says in the first issue, 'It's a kind of joke complaint, isn't it?' Everyone would kind of make light of it, yet it would be so intense and desperate for the person involved in it that you could see how it would impact on their lives. All the male agents would think she was a nympho. That would be the subject of conversation. Nobody would really understand her. I thought that putting a sex addict in this horrible situation would play with the reader's expectation, I thought. That's the worst situation a sex addict could be in. The dehumanization would play so well into the already-dehumanized, to a degree, lack of self-esteem that it would be potentially shattering. And yet it also struck me that a person who was used to dealing with those issues about themselves, if they were a strong person, they might have a chance of psychologically surviving. That was why I made Merrill Brears a sex addict. I thought it was a good decision. I thought that it made the character very credible, at least

to me. Her reactions seemed what a human being would do given that personality in that situation."

It is both Brears' addiction problem and intelligence that make her a very specific protagonist rather than the ciphers usually found in horror stories.

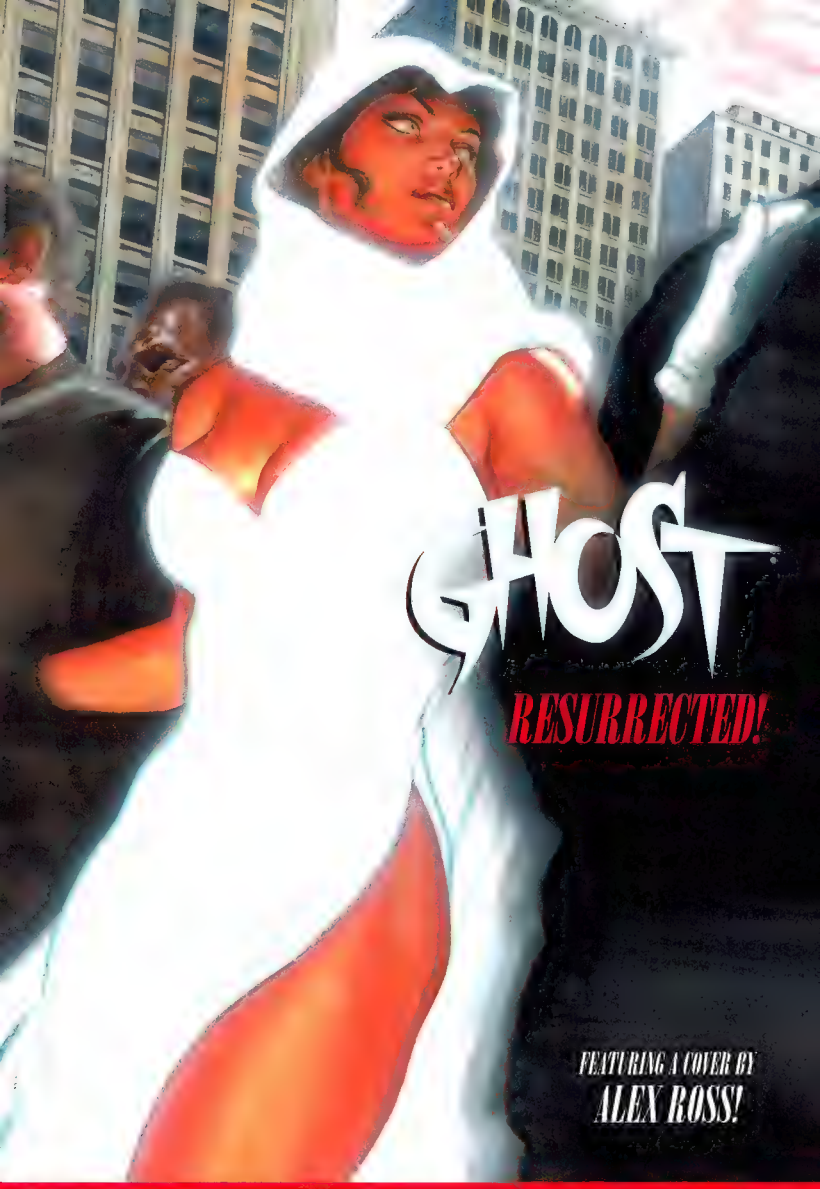
"Yes. And she's very different in a number of ways to the usual Lovecraft protagonist, which is she's a woman, which was a decision right from the start. Not only was I going to put in all the misogyny and anti-Semitism and xenophobia that were originally there in Lovecraft's stories. I was going to see what happened if you made a realistically-drawn woman into the protagonist of a Lovecraft story. It struck me that actually, given that most of Lovecraft's protagonists are already in a state of transportative hysteria, all of them, as he admitted to Robert E. Howard, they faint at the first sign of danger. It struck me that actually, a female FBI agent would probably be a lot more manly. And it was also of course to highlight the fact the Lovecraft never had a woman in any of his stories apart from the occasional albino midwife summoned up to help with the birth of Wilbur Whateley and his brother. So that was part of my thinking, right? Let's put some of the things that Lovecraft obviously went out of his way to avoid putting into his stories. So I suppose it grew out of that, really. All of the different elements, they were conscious intellectual decisions as to what to do with Lovecraft stories. But having made those decisions, I suddenly found that I'd got a very interesting palette to play with."

We're not done with this interview with one of the greatest horror writers of our time! Alan Moore returns in the next issue of Bleeding Cool Magazine, Issue #2.

CONTROVERSY: A SIDEBAR FROM ALAN MOORE

"If I could just address the fact in passing that although I read that one of the comic shops in Florida had said about my 'sexual philosophies,' and then there was another comics shop in Florida that sort of – I believe it was just called A Comic Shop – came to my defense, saying that why is it only Alan Moore's 'bizarre sexual philosophies that caused you such problems when he has quite a lot of bizarre philosophies?"

"I appreciate the help, but I just wish that there'd been someone who would actually explain what a philosophy was, as opposed to a horror story. Because if you confuse a philosophy and a horror story, then... well, I suppose it could explain part of the recent American political history that it's generally not a good idea... It wasn't a philosophy. I haven't got a philosophy that says that female FBI agents should be held in captivity and raped by a sea monster. That's not a philosophy that I hold - It's a plot. I don't think that H.P. Lovecraft had a philosophy. He was telling horror stories. It's a little point, but something people might choose to remember in future. Horror stories, they're one thing. They're generally like stories that are meant to horrify. Philosophies are talking about the eternal truths of human existence. My philosophies don't generally involve rape or sea monsters. Just wanted to get that straight, because I wouldn't want anybody to have the wrong idea there."



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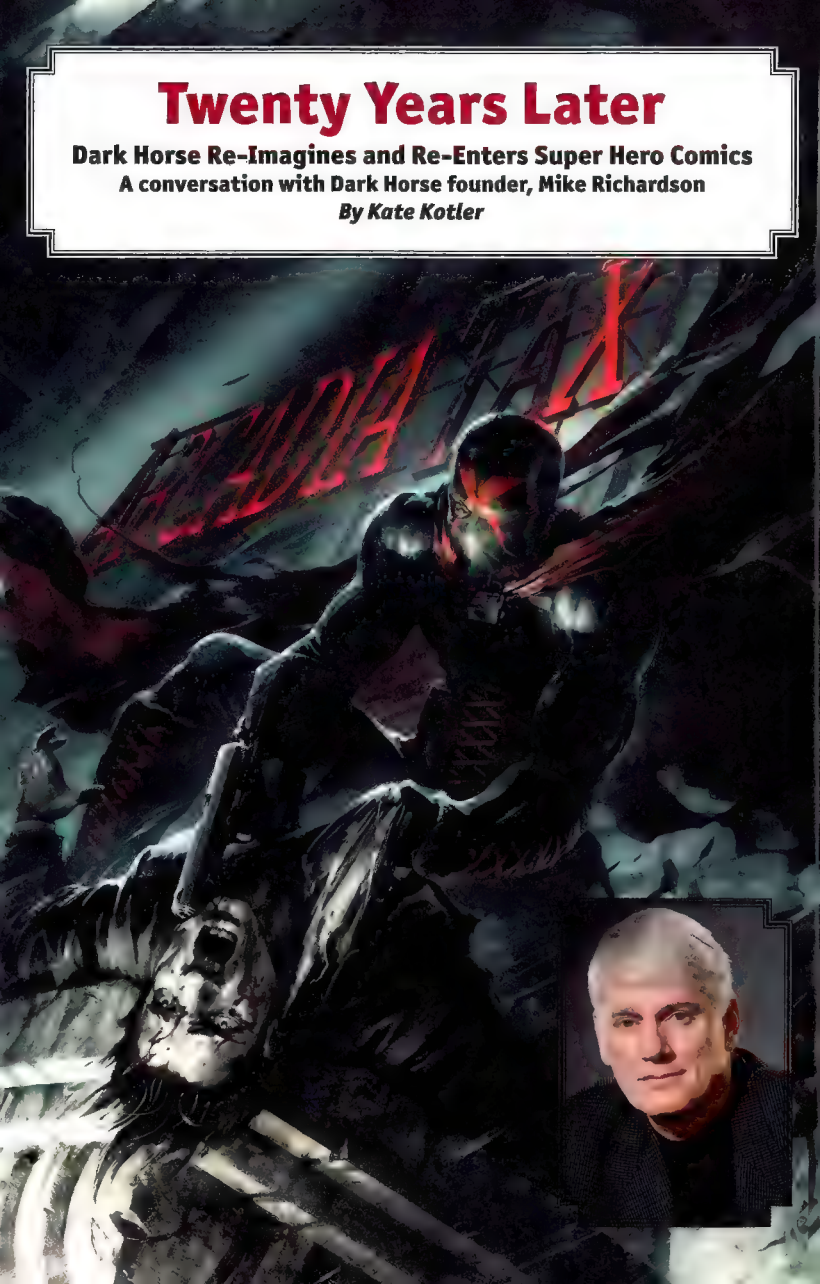
Twenty Years Later

Dark Horse Re-Imagines and Re-Enters Super Hero Comics

A conversation with Dark Horse founder, Mike Richardson

By Kate Kotler



TWENTY YEARS LATER:
DARK HORSE RE-IMAGINES AND RE-ENTERS SUPER HERO COMICS
by Kate Kotler

When Mike Richardson founded Dark Horse Comics in 1986, it wasn't his intention to go head-to-head with megalith superhero publishers like Marvel and DC for the mask and cape comics crowd. That's not to say that Richardson never had aspirations to craft superhero stories. One can see that in the initial Dark Horse titles from the late 80s, which Richardson cites as having "one foot in the superhero genre, with an eccentric twist."

In the early 1990s, as the company became a more established comics publisher, they decided it was time for Dark Horse to launch their own version of a superhero universe. Partly grounded in traditional cape and mask, partly in the science fiction comics of the 1960s–the result was "Comics Greatest World." The line ran from 1993 to 1996, but was unable to make enough headway into the mainstream superhero market to continue. The concept was shelved by Dark Horse, though select titles continued publication for several years following.

This past January, Dark Horse announced the first reappearance of Ghost–a CGW character which hadn't been seen since 1998–in issue 13 of Dark Horse Presents. To many industry insiders, this seemed reason to speculate that Richardson and Dark Horse might be getting ready to take a shot at becoming competitive in the superhero genre once again. They were right; as Ghost was re-imagined by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Phil Noto, and an undetermined number of superhero titles from Dark Horse were to follow throughout 2012 and 2013. Bleeding Cool recently sat down with Mike Richardson to chat about the company's relaunch of their superhero comic book line:

As Dark Horse relaunches its superhero line, will the stories be part of Comics Greatest World, or is this going to be a completely different universe?

They will have some elements of the original series from the 90s, but they are definitely going to be fresh starts with those characters.

What do you think caused the CGW imprint to cease publication? What were the factors which lead you guys to stopping that line?

We'd always planned once we were established to put our own kind of superheroes out there. We tried to think of a way to get people into the stories. Our approach presented a pretty complicated story line that was more based in science fiction and alien technology, with a pseudo-science basis for all of the characters. It was our plan to reveal the secrets behind these characters over 25 to 30 issues. What we didn't know was that everyone else on the planet had decided they were going to launch superhero universes at the same time.

There was a surging speculator market at the time - companies were telling people that some of their comic books were going to be worth a bazillion dollars someday. Telling someone that a book which sold in the hundreds of thousands was going to be valuable is – you know – crazy.

So a lot of things happened at the same time – first of all, there was a glut of product that came out at the same time, that had the same base, that was all vying for the same dollar. As we know, that collectors glut of the early-to-mid 90s was followed by a collapse of the [comics] market – there was a lot of fan disillusionment.

We had two titles that survived the market collapse, Ghost and X, and they ran for a period of years. We ceased publication when the sales dropped and interest waned in the titles with the idea we'd bring those characters back sometime later.

What makes now the best time for that?

Just as a company, we've experienced more success over the last year and a half. We think [superheroes] is a space we're not in. We've got some fun stories and we've got some great creators that are coming over to Dark Horse, so we think it's a good time for us to start trying to be in that space as a company. We have a lot more ways to promote and exploit the characters. So, we have a group of titles that – in the next year or two – will be superhero titles in the more traditional sense than we've published recently.

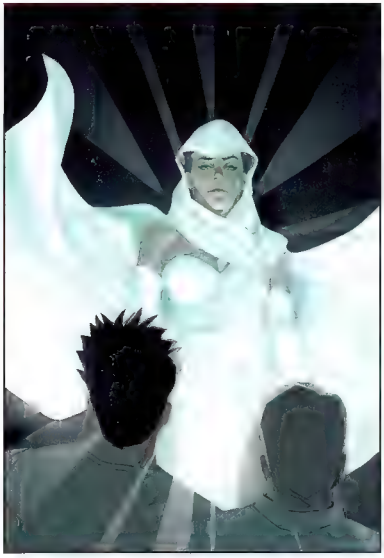
What characters from the CGW will be in the new line?

We have a number of the characters from Comics Greatest World coming out in a particular series that will be announced at New York Comic Con. It's common knowledge now, especially because of Dark Horse Presents, that Ghost and X will be back. We

have some new characters coming. I'm not telling you how, but they'll be related. We have some fun ideas, even some crossover ideas with other characters from other companies. We also have some traditional titles, and if you look at some of the archives we've been doing, you'll see some of the characters we'll be bringing back from the glorious past.

You've acquired two characters which were originally published by Dell – Captain Midnight and Brain Boy. What drove the decision to pick up those characters?

We had great ideas for story lines and great talent who was interested in working on them for us.



Where does Hellboy fit into this line? Is there any plan for him cross over into this new world?

You never know what's going to happen. In the past we had Hellboy in Ghost... But, you know Mike has created his own universe, he has a whole line of books in his "Mignola-verse." I wouldn't rule it out, but there are no plans for that right now.

In DHP #13, we have first reappearance of Ghost – the industry consensus is that Kelly Sue Deconnick is writing that series with the characters having no prior knowledge of the universe that they were part of originally. Are you planning on doing that with any of the other characters?

I think that all of them will have some relationship to what went before, but basically they're all getting that clean slate. You'll notice some differences in Ghost from the original character, although there are elements that may seem familiar from the original series. I'd say it's not a complete do-over, but it's a fresh start.

The character of Captain Midnight has such a long history - much of which is based in World War II. How is he going to fit into a new superhero world or universe that seems to be predominantly contemporary?

I think that is the fun of the series, because as you read it, you'll find out that it's that same character from World War II – steeped in 40s culture, particularly in military culture – suddenly he's in our politically correct world. This creates some interesting situations and confusion on the character's part.

So, kind of like a Captain America waking up in the middle of Times Square thing?

There is a similarity, but it seemed like Captain America fit right into the modern world – as I remember reading the books. Our guy is going to have a lot tougher time.

Brain Boy was never considered a spandex hero – he was just a kid with some accidental superpowers. Is Dark Horse going to approach the character from the same perspective, or are you going bring Brain Boy into a more traditional mask and cape kind of story arc?

I think that the thing that always stuck in my mind about Brain Boy was that he was rooted in a different genre than the superhero books of the day. At the time, this was very unique in the superhero genre. As a kid I was drawn to characters like that. While Brain Boy will have one foot in the superhero world, we're going to try to keep him more grounded in science fiction. So, he'll have elements of the traditional superheroes, but hopefully we can keep that unique feel he had in the 60s.

Is Dark Horse accepting pitches from outside sources for these books, or do you have this all pretty clearly defined and assigned?

Not only are we accepting them from established talent, we're seeking creators with ideas for their own heroes, too. We're looking to create some excitement in that area.

What advice would you give to aspiring creators who want to pitch to you to be involved in this line? What are you looking for, can you quantify it?

We're looking for unique and creative approaches to traditional superhero stories. We want books we find exciting, well told stories. There are so many different types of approaches to this particular genre that I can't say that we're looking for any one thing. We're just looking for material that we find fun and that fans would find exciting to read.

We're trying to put out some fun books. Dark Horse does a wide variety of material and [superheroes] are an area in which we've been lacking in the last few years. Superheroes are a huge part of comics and with the opportunities we have now – that we didn't have 16 years ago – we think we have a better chance of them being successful over a longer period of time and we're really excited about it.

Make sure to stay tuned to Bleeding Cool Online for up-to-the-minute announcements about Dark Horses' new superhero line.

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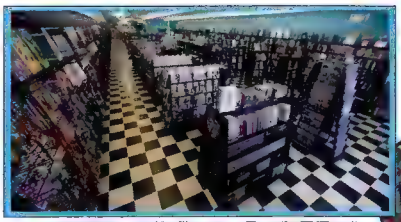

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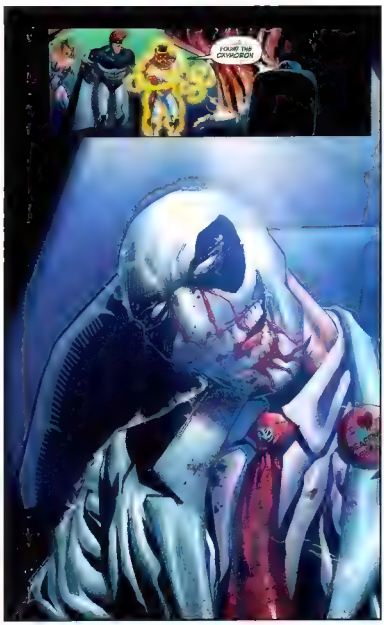
REVIEW: THE RED TEN
by Keith Davidsen

Writer Tyler James wants to kill the Justice League, but he'll settle for The Alliance, a heroic team created for *The Red Ten*. Illustrated by Cesar Feliciano, this ten-issue series is a cape-and-cowl revision of Agatha Christie's cherished whodunit, *And Then There Were None*. The premise sees ten heroes pursuing a killer on a deserted island, only to be whittled down, one by one.

The measure of a murder-mystery, of course, is whether the reader is effectively kept in suspense, and I can honestly say that *The Red Ten* does satisfy. I was struck with a morbid curiosity in how each hero would meet his or her untimely end, and that fascination spurred me to keep reading. Admittedly, my own love for Christie's detective novel further fueled that drive, as I was eager to see how closely the series' ending would mirror the classic. Who will survive to the end, and how is the killer managing to pull off such elaborate murders?

The storytelling is a bit clunky, however. In trying to parallel Christie's original, James and Feliciano introduced a wide cast of unknown characters. Ambitious though they may be, the creators clearly struggled to meet the challenge of making a reader sympathetic to The Alliance's plight, or at least, those of certain expendable team members. I found myself wishing that the cast was smaller, the tale more intimate.

A nostalgic 1990's aesthetic, the adherence to a prophetic and creepy nursery rhyme, and a deepening exploration of the villain Oxymoron's madness round out the good reasons to support Comix Tribe's latest miniseries. It's not the perfect locked room mystery, but its gruesome twists and turns are certain to entertain.



REVIEW: HYPERNATURALS

By Rick Verbanas

Veteran comic writers Andy Lanning and Dan Abnett have been playing in the cosmic playground for years. Whether taking on the Legion of Super Heroes for DC Comics or Guardians of the Galaxy for Marvel, this writing duo is known for entertaining tales which span worlds, galaxies and beyond. With BOOM!'s Hypernaturals, Lanning and Abnett appear to be hitting their stride.

Unlike before, Lanning and Abnett have full creative license to craft a universe they see fit. No continuity holding them back from writing the stories they like. No licensing restricting them from altering a character, or sending them to an early grave. In result, Abnett and Lanning are having a lot of fun with the Hypernaturals and it shows.

Artist Brad Walker is familiar with the writing duo, as he penciled issues of Guardians and War of Kings. Both he and Andres Guinaldo do a very nice job with layout and storytelling in this premiere issue. The book has a sharp, detailed look.

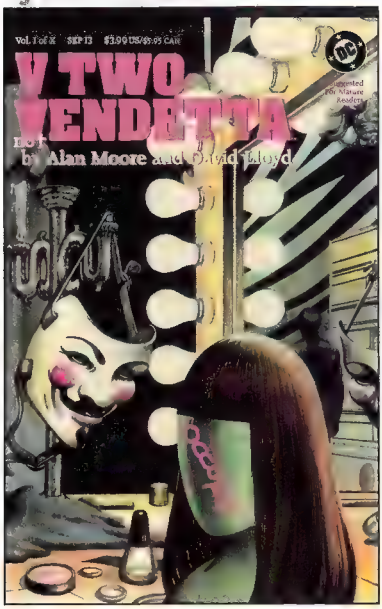
Early on in the first issue, one can see a well thought out universe. Set in what appears to be a distant future, Hypernaturals kicks off with a flashback that helps set the tone for the book. Fast forward seven years, we see characters have changed, some for the worse. There is a feeling of dread which envelopes this world and the main characters early on. The public demand answers and nervously awaits any word of hope when the current team of Hypernaturals are lost and presumed dead. It is up to a few remaining members from the previous team to come out of retirement and help shepherd a couple of raw recruits to search for the missing team.

Always interesting in stories set in other worlds/times, is how do they compare to our own society? Where are the advances in technology, fashion, culture? When a new recruit complains about being turned down due to her appearance, the writers surprise the reader by not delivering what you expect. Nice to know society has made some progress.

Abnett and Lanning do everything one looks for with a first issue; start and end with compelling action (both scenes offer a sense of grand scale), introduce characters with enough backstory to want to know more, and create a universe one would like to explore.

One thing is for certain: in this cosmic tale, anything can happen.

V2 VENDETTA
by Rich Johnston



Before Watchmen. Sandman Zero. DC Comics is going back to the past, revisiting the holy of holies to uncover new riches. With or without the original creators. But after these two monuments, what could be next? Well I've been sent a rather spurious document that may shed some light. Or it might have been knocked up on a photocopier for a laugh. What do you think?

Proposal: V Before Vendetta

Obviously Alan Moore isn't interested, we did try calling him but he just held the phone next to a boiling kettle. But strangely, David Lloyd isn't interested either, not even after we offered him money for an unconvincing quote. Never mind, our lawyers say we can do what we want. A series of comics telling the story of the fall of England and the rise of Norsefire. Five of them, naturally.

V For Reginald
by Tom DeFalco and Paul Ryan

We start by actually seeing V's real face, revealed in the clouds. He is mild mannered Reginald Pankhurst, a firework selling enthusiast who feels the true meaning of Bonfire Night has been lost. He's working in his fireworks shop when he is seized by the new government for keeping incendiary devices on his person and condemned to the prison camps. Which is where he got all those neat skills to blow stuff up, do you see?

At Home With Mr And Mrs Hammond
by Trevor Kavanagh and Stephen Platt

Did you know that Evey's parents actually lived next to Reginald Pankhurst (AKA V For Vendetta?) You do now. Including the revelation that he babysat for them when they wanted to go and protest against something. That was until Reginald let Evey play with fireworks and he was banished from their home forever more. But, still having a soft spot for Evey, he keeps an eye on her through binoculars, mounted behind a Guy Fawkes mask.

Vote Susan, Vote Often
by Scott Lobdell and Brett Booth

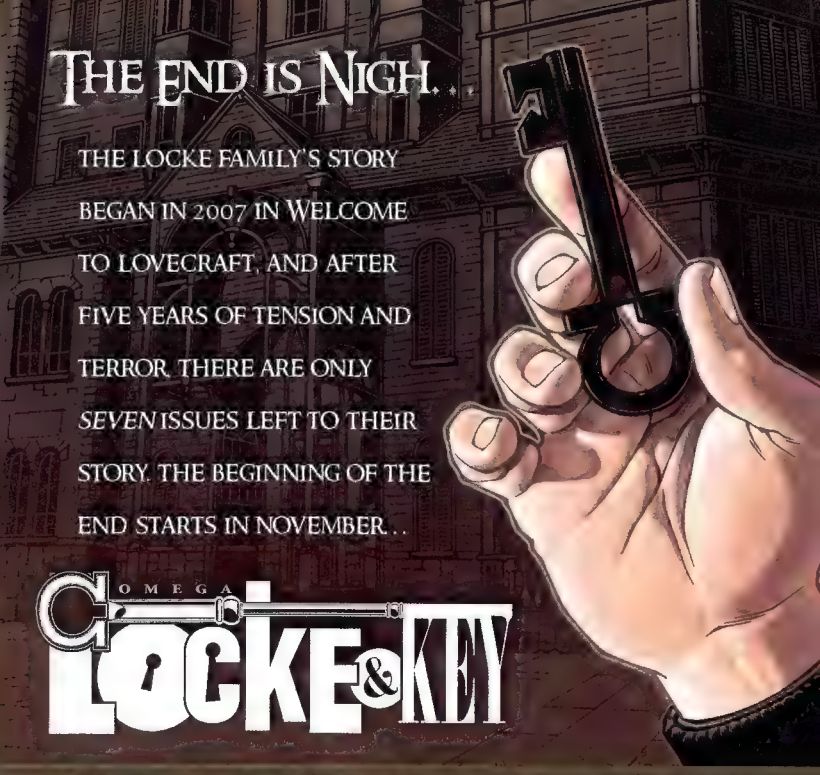
There is the election campaign of Adam Susan, against the backdrop of nuclear war, as it details his obsession with putting more CCTV in robbery high spots, fighting immigrants with tanks while trying to hide his master plan of creating artificially intelligent computers that love him.

Eric Finch, Vigilante
by Ann Nocenti and Scott McDaniel

Talk about your Detective Comics, before he rose to the dizzy heights of Scotland Yard, Eric Finch was a vigilante who dressed up as a bat and patrolled the streets of South London, which makes him a bit of a hypocrite in the original comic now, doesn't it? Exactly. And you used to like him as well. Not any more.

The Accountant
by newcomer Brian McGuggin and Jim Lee

Somewhere in the depths of DC Comics, sits an accountant, who has been pressed with the challenge of coming up with ways to reuse valuable intellectual properties without any care for the way the originals are regarded. He hates his life, day after day, running the numbers to see what they can get away with, sucking away his soul with every licensed toaster. Deciding he can take no more, he writes himself into one of the proposals, assigns himself as the writer and Jim Lee as the artist. Then blows up DC Comics with gelginite. The end.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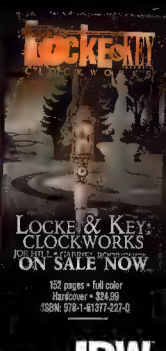

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GAZE INTO THE FIST OF DREDD!
by Gavin Lees

In the mid-twentieth century, Britain began to build upwards. In place of the rubble and desolation caused by World War II, tower blocks were erected as quick solutions to house a booming population. They offered futuristic monuments to post-war progress and reassurance in the vision of government. It was not long before the cracks literally began to show and structural decay set in, causing many to fall into disrepair or collapse completely. Not only that, but the buildings engendered social problems, creating an isolated populace, hidden in labyrinthine corridors which became prime targets for break-ins and muggings. Yet their construction marched on, and by the late 70s, cities like London and Glasgow were surrounded by these concrete monoliths – imposing and undesirable, but for many, the only source of affordable housing.

By this stage, the downward cycle of crime and social unrest had become so great that police were posted in many tower blocks, but their presence did little to quell the antisocial and delinquent behavior.

It's not difficult to imagine that this modern milieu was on the mind of John Wagner when he created Mega City One with Carlos Ezquerra in 1977 for a new strip in *2000 A.D.* It was a futuristic vision of New York, which had expanded outwards and upwards to become a concrete nightmare, where people live their entire lives in Cityblocks – giant tower blocks of 60,000 inhabitants – "from birth in the cityblock hospital to death in the cityblock crematorium." Of course, the city was not the star of their new strip, that role fell to its title character: Judge Dredd. A futuristic cop, part of an elite group of officers granted the power to uphold the law by convicting and sentencing criminals on the scene – judge, jury and executioner – it was a frightening response to the calls for increased police powers and a cruel satire of the modern world. Dredd is a product and an avatar of his city. The image of the character, with his brick-like chin, domed helmet and near-fetishistic leather uniform has become an icon of comics and, after 35 years in the pages of 2000 AD, he is about to be transposed to two new and very different media – the *Dredd* motion picture, and a new comic series for IDW Publishing.

The origins of the character are more the result of serendipity, than any calculated attempt to create a figure for the ages. When Pat Mills was hired by IPC Publications in 1975 to launch a new science fiction magazine, he brought his old writing partner, Wagner, on-board. At the time, a title like *2000 A.D.*

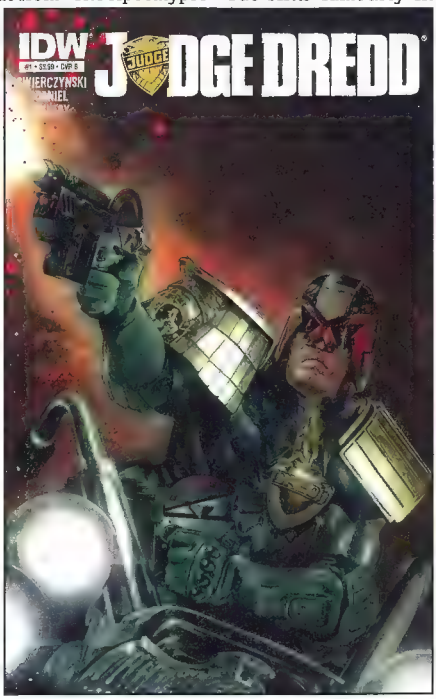
still sounded incredibly futuristic, and neither writer thought for a minute that it would ever last that long. While developing characters for the weekly comic, Mills had a concept for a horror strip – an occult detective called Judge Dread (after the notorious British reggae singer) – but when that proved unworkable for a sci-fi title, Wagner took the name and came up with the concept of his single-minded lawman. When Spanish artist Ezquerra produced the first designs of Judge Dredd, however, Wagner balked, thinking that he looked too much like a conquistador, and nearly abandoned the idea. Since then, though, Ezquerra has gone to become the definitive Dredd artist and still remains a semi-regular contributor to the strip.

For all that Dredd would become, the first few years of the strip – delivered in six-page weekly installments – were incredibly one-dimensional. He was a big man with a big gun (the appropriately-named "Lawgiver") who got the bad guys, with a revolving team of writers and artists gradually fleshing out parts of Dredd's universe. It was not until Wagner became a regular writer in the story "Robots" that the anti-authority subtext began to emerge and the satirical humour took on a much more integral role. At the time, this was revolutionary, especially in a magazine that, for all intents and purposes, was aimed at children. This is often painfully evident in these early stories, which have the taint of silver age goofiness to them. On one cover (beautifully realized by Ron Smith) we see Dredd single-handedly holding back an armada of battleships with just his Lawgiver – "Surrender now and no-one will get hurt!" Although crude, it's nonetheless a fairly subversive critique of fascist justice, and this anti-authority mindset made Dredd wildly popular. It paved the way for more subversive and dark material in the magazine like Nemesis the Warlock, Rogue Trooper and Strontium Dog.

Yet, Dredd matured – whether as a deliberate result of him ageing in real-time in strip (which puts him at about 70 at the moment) or just the writers finding their feet with the material – and became increasingly morally and ideologically complex. The first real, challenging episode is the climax of the "Apocalypse War" storyline. It's a sprawling 25-part storyline, practically a graphic novel, with some of the finest early work from Ezquerra. It centres on a nuclear war between Mega City One and the Soviet East-Meg One, which is ended when Dredd launches one of the East-Meg's missiles back at them, destroying the city and killing half-a-billion people in the process. When asked to reconsider by the East-Meg commander,

Dredd rationalizes the impending genocide in pure numbers, *"Half my city is burnt to ash by East-Meg missiles, and you're begging me for mercy?"* This was three years before *Watchmen* would tackle similar themes and scenarios, but unlike Ozymandias in Moore and Gibbons' work, Dredd has to face the consequences of his actions for the next 30 years, and the fallout from "The Apocalypse War" can still be felt in 2012's "Day of Chaos" storyline.

The cruel fascism of Dredd became much more obvious in the 80s, when Britain began to experience its fair-share of police brutality, but as always, Wagner turns his lens on the USA, keeping the satire always at one step removed. In the stunning serial, "America," which appeared in the *Judge Dredd Megazine*, we see Dredd at perhaps his least sympathetic possibly because it is told through the eyes of others. America is a young immigrant woman who joins "the Dems" – a pro-democracy activist group, labeled terrorists by the government. Her affiliation with the group leads her to kill a Judge, and is pursued for sentencing by Dredd. Her death (already foretold at the story's opening) is pure symbolism, as she is shot while carrying a torn American flag and her body lies beneath the Statue of Liberty, itself dwarfed by the Statue of Judgment.



With the recent settlement of the Blair Peach case in the UK, and Rodney King's on-camera beating in the USA still occupying the news cycle, this was as timely and relevant as Dredd has ever been.

But the strip was often ahead of its time and, like the best science fiction, began to indulge in some darkly comic futurism. Pat Mills famously introduced the concept of dinosaur theme parks during his early run on the series, a good ten years before anyone heard the name *Jurassic Park*. When Alan Grant began his long-lasting writing partnership with Wagner – finding a creative synergy that would make for some of the most memorable Dredd stories: "It Pays to be Mental," "Pirates of the Black Atlantic," "Judge Death Lives," and "Letter From a Democrat" – it began a more prophetic era of Dredd. Grant credits many of his ideas to a "fancy rat" convention that he attended, where he learned about the behavior of the rodents and saw how humans followed many of the same patterns. From this incongruous source, we find the Judges banning refined sugar to fight obesity (apparently the rats who developed a taste for sugar could not control their intake and became obese) much like Britain was to experience in the early 2000s; an extreme version of the war

on drugs that encompassed even caffeine; as well as other scenarios that seem all-too familiar today, like the Smokeatorium – the one place in Mega City One where people are allowed to smoke; and, of course, banning comics because they are the most subversive of literature. Seeing the fiction of *Judge Dredd* become reality dimmed Grant's view of Britain immensely, to the point where he now views it as a fascist state:

"A fascist country by definition is a country where the individual means nothing and the state means everything. Individuals have very few rights in this country."

With such an impressive legacy behind the title, there are some very high expectations for *Judge Dredd* to live up to – even more so with its latest reincarnation as an ongoing monthly series from IDW. Many readers will remember the short-lived and critically-reviled series that DC launched to coincide with Danny Cannon's *Judge Dredd* movie. With Alex Garland's Dredd about to hit a cinema near you, it may seem like a case of history repeating. Speaking exclusively to *Bleeding Cool Magazine*, Chris Ryall from IDW was eager to put readers at ease. "We at IDW have built quite a name on revitalizing properties with great creative teams. That's what we're looking to do here, except in this case, the property doesn't need revitalizing and is still thriving in the *Megazine* as well. So we're here to complement what's come before and is still happening there. Honestly, I do also have the benefit of time—I was exposed to Dredd as a kid through those Eagle reprints of the early '80s, so I read my fair share of what Wagner and others did so well. And I was also there to see DC's take on the character and see for myself what worked for me as a reader and what didn't. Hindsight can be a valuable thing when moving forward."

One of the many things that fans have complained about over the years is that Americans don't "get" Judge Dredd and the layered nature of the character. Ryall simply shrugs these accusations off. "I think anyone who's seen what IDW has done under my auspices will have no fear that we can dish it out as good as the Brits. Us Americans also laughed with Ricky Gervais back in the day, and we're able to admit that he's become a bit of a laugh for the wrong reasons now. We can do this. We don't all watch *Two and a Half Men*. Some of us loved *Arrested Development*." Ryall won't be writing the series, however. That task has fallen to Duane Swierczynski who has written his fair share of gritty characters, like The Punisher and Wolverine.

Swiercynski was chosen rather for his literary chops. "I first went to Duane because —while he's written a lot of good comics, he's written some truly great novels—I don't feel like he's been given a comic title that so perfectly suits his skills as this one until now. Don't get me wrong—John Wagner casts a shadow that crosses the pond and extends across our land as well. He and Alan Grant and so many others have worked such wonders with Dredd, given him and the characters and the book such a strong voice, that it's daunting for many to even attempt to slip into their shoes. And when it doesn't work, it's immediately apparent. Me, I love a good challenge, and this is one of the best."

Joining Swierczynski on art duties is Nelson Daniel, who Ryall thinks is a natural fit. "He was able to handle carnage involving motorcycles and a killer semi-truck, a lot of seedy bikers, some extreme violence and carnage on *Road Rage*, all of which felt like a great proving ground for Dredd. Now, instead of doing that out on the open highway, he'll be doing it inside the crowded, insane confines of Mega City-One. Nelson is also a longtime Dredd fan and admirer of Carlos Ezquerra and Brian Bolland, and he knows what this task is and what kind of fan base will be watching him. He also liked a good challenge, and he's certainly risen to it so far."

The series will show a younger Dredd, in a new continuity, which may lead to retellings of classic storylines as well as entirely new avenues down which to lead the series. As for its timeliness to coincide with the new movie, Ryall remains philosophical on that point. "The world always needs a darkly funny, ultra-violent character out there meting out justice to those who deserve it. The world has always been filled with despots, corrupt politicians, crooked bankers, immoral religious figures, and every other dark human stain; who's sitting in the seats of power or what's going on in the world doesn't make a difference; there have been and will always be people and situations that need satirizing. And taking down by extreme force."

FORGED FROM THE PAGES OF Charismagic COMES THIS WINTER'S HOTTEST MINI-SERIES
Charismagic
The Death Princess
#1
THE THREE PART EPIC MINI-SERIES THAT WILL SCAR YOUR SOUL
WRITTEN BY CHARISMAGIC CREATOR
VINCE HERNANDEZ
ILLUSTRATED BY CARTOON STORYBOARD ARTIST
EMILIO LOPEZ
DIGITALLY PAINTED BY COLORIST
JOCELYN DUNN
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HOCUS POCUS

SECRETS OF CHARISMAGIC REVEALED! ***By Keith Davidsen***

HOCUS POCUS: SECRETS OF CHARISMAGIC REVEALED!

by Keith Davidsen

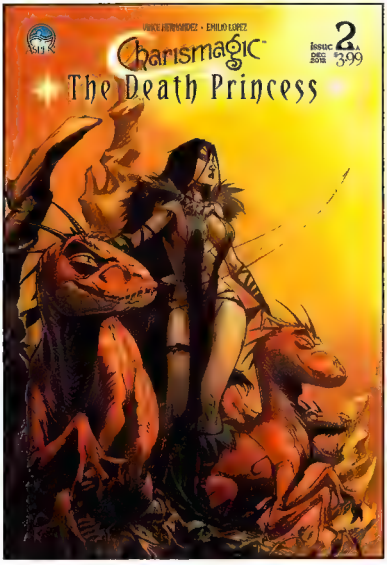
It's hard to believe that Aspen Comics, the company founded by the late and beloved creator Michael Turner, is turning ten this coming January. That's ten years of inspired artwork, ten years of action and adventure, ten years of fantastic new worlds that leap off the page!

In celebration of their 2013 milestone, the publisher will launch its most ambitious project yet, the "Aspen 10 for 10" initiative. For ten straight months beginning in February, Aspen will release a new series each month, comprised of five returning Aspen favorites and five fresh, never-before-seen titles. Not only that, but each debut issue will retail for only one dollar, a perfect introductory price. "To say we're excited and a little frightened would be an understatement," says Vince Hernandez, the editor-in-chief at Aspen Comics. "It is, by far, the largest program we have ever attempted, but I'm certain our talented creators and dedicated production and editorial team will come through like pros, while honoring the legacy of our founder."

While the full details of Aspen's year-long initiative are a carefully guarded secret, we've exposed their plans to expand the *Charismagic* series, a title created in 2011 and written by Hernandez himself, in a huge way. And they're not just waiting for the "10 for 10" event to make their move. They're kicking off with a *Charismagic: The Death Princess* miniseries this November, a second offering of *Charismagic* in May, and more!

WHERE DID THE MAGIC COME FROM?

The original *Charismagic* series introduced Vegas stage performer Hank the Magnificent, a novice in real magic who becomes an unexpected savior once all of humanity is magically transported to a deadly dimension. Illustrated by spectacular artists Khary Randolph and Emilio Lopez, the series featured all manner of mythological creatures and ethereal settings, making it a worthy addition to the company's wide selection of fantasy titles.



"After finishing the supernatural action-adventure book *Dellec*, which I co-created with Aspen Co-Owner and President Frank Mastromauro, I had my heart set on this idea of a Las Vegas magician who, in fact, has real magical powers," recalls Hernandez. "I pitched the idea to Frank and he gave it the thumbs up, and I was off. The outline and script phase took a few months, and once we began the visual stage we really began to pick up steam. In total, there was about a year-long pre-production before we began work on the first page."

Aspen Comics is a tight-knit studio of creators with a far-reaching vision, and Hernandez admits that his many previous experiences on Aspen projects paved the way for *Charismagic*. "It's been an exciting and challenging lineup of radically different titles that I've been lucky enough to write. I learned how to provide my own spin on *Fathom: Kiani* and *Soulfire: Shadow Magic*. Writing chores on Dellec taught me how to collaborate with a co-writer and how

to handle a supernatural book. *Executive Assistant: Lotus* was one of the best experiences I've had a writer. So, when it came time to wrap my brain around *Charismagic*, I felt as if I was in the zone, and it all just fell into place perfectly."

PULLING BACK THE CURTAIN

From the first few pages of *Charismagic*, readers could immediately see that the series was grounded in an extensive mythology, a history of age-old otherworldly conflict reaching back eons. In November, fans will be able to explore the roots of the magical universe in *Charismagic: The Death Princess*. Set in an ancient time, the three-issue miniseries not only unites the unlikely allies Kon and Samsun, but also introduces a key new figure in the mythos: Orlana, the despotic princess whose ability to control minds threatens to tear down all human civilization. As a story set in the past, this new Charismagic storyline provides a perfect new jumping-on point for readers.

According to Hernandez, *Death Princess* will show an epic war that spanned different eras and even different dimensions. "I really wanted to open up the world in this series and explore different beings and creatures of myth. We will see gryphons and dinosaurs, wizards and sorcerers, and of course, a few magical entities we designed from our own insane minds. Also, an all-new Druid will be revealed —and let me just say, not all Druids are alike in personality and appearance," says Hernandez. "Series artist Emilio Lopez is really stretching his creative muscles with thrilling character designs. The level of detail and imagination that Emilio is bringing to the book will not disappoint fans."

Fans of the original *Charismagic* run will recall its unexpected final twist, when certain heroic characters shifted allegiances. There's a certain literary symmetry in next month's miniseries, as Hernandez explains. "Not only is betrayal the driving force behind the action in *Charismagic: The Death Princess* — it is the backbone that holds together the entire plot. Early on in the story, an act of betrayal between two allies essentially splits the world of magic into two warring factions, and this betrayal ultimately reshapes everything that follows.

What else will *Death Princess* reveal about the *Charismagic* world... or more appropriately, *worlds?* While its dramatic action will shed light on the politics and nature of magic that later affects protagonists Hank and Sudana, the new series will share further insight into the ancient world through the use of "Druid Scriptures," prose back-up features designed to introduce concepts and characters. These seemingly-archaic records first appeared in the #0 issue from last March, hinting at such mysterious entities as the God of Futility and the Charmer Queen. "Oh, those two will most certainly make an appearance at some point in the story," hinted Hernandez.

HANK THE MAGNIFICENT

While *Death Princess* serves as a rewarding aside for fans, Hank returns as the headliner in *Charismagic*'s second volume, illustrated by the ever-imaginative Khary Randolph and due to hit stands in May 2013. Although, we should say, the venue has changed a bit since Hank's first appearance. Samsun's escape to Earth and subsequent defeat has left the world scarred, with much of humanity scattered across two dimensions. How will the global catastrophe affect the characters?

"Hank will be much more confident in his abilities, but that confidence will carry him into far more dangerous situations," says Hernandez. "After every mortal human was sent to a magical wasteland known as

the Void Realm, he finds himself taking on more of a responsibility to both humankind and the magic world that he belongs to. Along the way, the pressure of such a difficult balancing act will take its toll on him physically and emotionally."

In addition, Hernandez will use Hank's deeper grasp of power as a device to explore, in his words, "just how vast and far-reaching the magical boundaries in *Charismagic* are. In the magical subculture, Vanishers are revered for their limitless potential. Hank has only begun to scratch the surface of what he can become in his lifetime, but readers will learn very soon what boundaries he can cross."

Hank is not the only character to experience immense changes of conscience and ability. The popular Druid character (and newfound romantic interest) Sudana must adapt to a more human lifestyle than she was accustomed. Sparkles, the talking cat and constant companion, will no longer have to hide her powers, resulting in a more aggressive stance towards magical beings. Finally, Hector and Alle – Hank's mentor and ex-girlfriend, respectively – will return from the Void Realm with their minds irrevocably poisoned by the sorcerer Serké. "Even Lar Ka Rel will finally see his moment in the spotlight," adds Hernandez, reflecting on the monstrous yet memorable beast whose screen time in the first volume lasted only a few panels. "Not only that, but the character has an immediate impact on the story — and a possible catastrophic event in Las Vegas."

And what of the everyday people, the casualties of a magical war, that expand *Charismagic*'s backdrop to its global scale? "Everything has changed on Earth. Those humans that returned from the Void Realm are fundamentally changed, and will never be the same. Still, they will have it much better than the humans that Kon is unable to bring back, or the ones who perished in the Void Realm. Everything is played for keeps in the *Charismagic* universe. There are no easy outs for these characters, especially the humans."

CURTAIN CALL

It's going to be a huge year for Aspen, with *Charismagic* only one of many exciting developments at the company. For those who enjoyed the 2011-2012 series and are hungry for more, there will be no shortage this coming winter and spring; The first volume collection, *The Death Princess*, a one-shot special focusing on Sparkles (featuring artist Siya Oum), and *Charismagic* Volume Two. To quote Vince Hernandez, "It's going to be a fun ride!"

TOP
100
Power
List

THE TOP 100 POWER LIST OF COMIC BOOKS

By Rich Johnston

Welcome to the first Top 100 Power List for comics. Its aim is to list the top 100 most powerful people in the English speaking comics industry.

But how do you define power in the comics industry? The ability to hire and fire? The ability to commission a comic – or stop it from happening? The ability to create a comic – and then make it sell? The ability to influence the work and work practices of others? What about the power of a position, but one that isn't reflected in the person who is holding it?

This list attempts to reflect all these issues, not just the possession of power, but someone actually using it to make a difference and committed to comics. As every super hero team knows, having more than one power on hand can be very useful. Which is why, in The Power List, many people are listed at a higher positions than their bosses. For example, can Diane Nelson draw a best-selling comic book and push it into the top ten single-handedly? The evidence suggests not.

This is an attempt to be honest and reflective about what the comic book industry is, rather than what we might like it to be. There are relatively few women. It is rather white. There's only one African American on the list. And there are plenty of people – myself included – who resemble The Simpsons Comic Book Guy more than we would like..

You won't agree with all of the people listed on here, let alone the order they are listed in. That, at least, I think we can agree on. Feel free to tell us why not, who we missed, and whose power we over-exaggerated.

But this is not just your average everyday power list. Every listing has a signature box. Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to get an authentic signature of the people on the power list in their respective boxes. Photographs of the autographs occurring will help prove authenticity for the more elusive executives.

The grand prize for the first lucky soul who gets them all will be over $2,000 worth of graphic novels from our kind sponsors at Boom, Avatar, and IDW, as well as the prestige of *The Man Or Woman Who Collected The Comic Book Industry*, and an article about your collecting adventures on the web site. Over the next year, keep us aware of your progress on the Bleeding Cool message board at http://bcool.bz/top100-contest, and we will close this competition September 1, 2013. If no one has gotten them all, we'll award the prize to whomever has the most signatures at that time. Once you have 90 or more, do touch base. A few of these will be really tough...

Full contest rules for this year are posted at http://bcool.bz/2012-top100.

The basics are: Once you get above 90 signatures, you'll be a contender and you should be in touch with us. If you have them all, or if we are getting close to the end of the contest (Sept 1, 2013), we'll have you send in a photocopy of your magazine and any documenting photos for verification. We may ask for your original magazine in the event of questions about how authentic some signatures are, but we'd return it to you. If we end up with a tie, we will split up the goodies evenly amongst the tying parties (or see if we can get those publishers to pony up more books!) Be nice asking people for their autographs!

Any questions, please drop a line to rickverbanas@bleedingcool.com.

And yes, I'm on the list. I wrote it, didn't I? There are a few people ahead of me though.

Rich Johnston, *London, October 2012*

01 **JIM LEE** Born in South Korea in 1964, Jim Lee followed his father into medicine studying at Princeton. Wanting to break into comics, he promised his parents he would return if unsuccessful. Guess what happened.

His style, initially a mix of John Byrne and Appleseed, was a hit at Marvel and he still holds the record for the best-selling single monthly comic book in the world with the relaunched X-Men #1.

But soon after, he left to start his own publisher with a group of fellow artists, Image Comics. He created a fully-fledged studio, Wildstorm, with a wealth of titles from *WildCATS* to *Stormwatch* to *The Authority*, and specialising in licensing. DC Comics then bought Wildstorm for a very healthy sum and an executive position for Jim Lee.

Now he's co-publisher of DC Comics, the designer of the DC Universe Online and the relaunched DC Universe and finishing a best-selling run on Justice League, with more subsequent months at number one in the charts than any other.

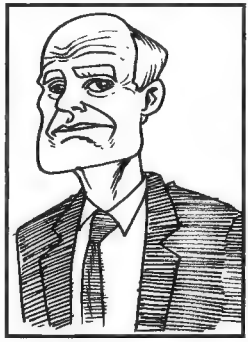
He also provides rare variant covers to a slew of DC books, that guarantee a premium pay day for retailers, and encourage them to stock heavily on the original issues.

He has a massive corporate machine behind him, that need him more than he needs them. And he's staying in comics. And that's why he is number one in comics.

Next year's position depends upon: How the new *Superman* title sells.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

02 **ISAAC PERLMUTTER** He may have lucked into the comics business by owning a toy company that Marvel wanted, then spinning their eventual bankruptcy deal to pay him in a title and stock that put him in charge. But he took that position and ran with it to the hills.



He was the principal figure behind Marvel Studios deciding to make their own movies rather than just farm out the licenses. And when he finally relented and allowed Disney to buy Marvel, he ended up with a billion dollars in his bank account. At which point, many at his age would have been happy to put their feet up.

But Isaac Perlmutter fought in the Six Day War. And has been fighting his whole life. Famous for running Marvel as if it were a penny pinching start up, he monitors pen use, the amount of kettles in the kitchen, and fires anyone he suspects of not bringing in instantaneous revenue. And now he's getting the opportunity to do that all around Disney as well. Perlmutter is the richest man working in comics, and his financial whims have direct and lasting impact and influence on the comics that Marvel produce, and the people who produce them. Oh, and he's packing at all times.

Next year's position depends upon: The success of a certain lawsuit from ex-Disney employees tarnishing his name at the company.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

03 **ROBERT KIRKMAN** What an amazing last five years. He's now the

first and only non-founder partner on the board at Image Comics, with the *Walking Dead* TV show in his pocket, the *Thief Of Thieves* TV show on the way. The *Walking Dead* volumes that own the bookstore charts month in, month out, and have all but single handedly saved Diamond Book Distribution, making up half their stock ordered.

Add to that his Skybound production company publishing work by other people and the desire to create and push new kinds of comic books and formats, Robert Kirkman has marked himself out as one of today's principal players, freed of certain market demands and able to do, well, pretty much as he pleases.

With the legal case with *Walking Dead* co-creator Tony Moore settled, and the long game in mind, his new work is constantly anticipated as he continues to build his audience globally. He's the only American creator whose work is being published in France and the USA simultaneously. You should see how well *The Walking Dead* sells in France.

International, multi-media dominance, independent and setting the record (until this month at least) for the best-selling American comic book in a decade are the toppers. There's going to be plenty more to come.

Next year's position depends on: Walking Dead not pulling a "Heroes."

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

04 **GEOFF JOHNS** Interning with Richard Donner, producer of the

Superman films, was possibly the biggest break the young Geoff Johns could have hoped for, then rapidly becoming a production assistant. A tour around DC Comics from Eddie Berganza came with an opportunity to pitch a *Stars And S.T.R.I.P.E.* comic. Johns was in.

With a bunch of *Avengers* work at Marvel, Johns rapidly became a hot property in comics, his film production background underlining his appeal. He brought back Hal Jordan as Green Lantern, and helped spin off a series of events, titles, and even a movie. Marvel instigated a game plan to get him back in the fold, but the possibilities of a Warners backed DC appealed more and he was made Chief Creative Officer, for DC Entertainment.

He wrote the Flashpoint series that relaunched the DC Comics Universe, and has been heavily involved in the New 52. He's also heading up his own creative hit squad on the West Coast, is involved with all DC Nation, TV, movies and games, and even managed to spin the failure of the Green Lantern movie to his favour within the company. Like Jim Lee, while he has superiors above him, few of them could guarantee a best-selling comic like Johns.

Plus he co-owns a comic shop. That's got to come in handy.

Next year's position depends upon: The success of the new *JLA*.

Photo Credit: DC

05 **JOE QUESADA** An illustration graduate, Joe Quesada is one of the few

mainstream superhero artists whose major influence was Alphonse Mucha. As a jobbing artist he worked on Valiant titles such as Ninjak and Solar, before he started doing more work for the Big Two. And that could have been his career forever, if he hadn't formed his own company with inker Jimmy Palmiotti, Event Comics, and started publishing their own work. Event was then hired by Marvel to revamp some of their edgier comics that had lost their way. The pair hired the likes of Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon on Punisher and Kevin Smith on Daredevil and saw a number of their revamps unexpectedly top the charts and receive rave reviews.

So when the company reorganised itself following bankruptcy, Bob Harras was ditched and Joe Quesada promoted to his position of Editor-In-Chief, where he stayed longer than anyone since Stan Lee. He gave big projects to less-than-familiar names such as Brian Bendis and Mark Millar, and became a champion for the company, with many media appearances, and rabble rousing the crowds at comic conventions like Barnum. He's recently returned to be more hands on with its comic book editorial decision making process, and much of this summer's Avengers Vs X-Men has his handiwork over it.

Next year's position depends on: Whether Marvel NOW can repeat the DC New 52 trick.

06 **BRIAN MICHAEL BENDIS** Born in Cleveland, Bendis combined his

love for comic books and crime novels in early comics for Caliber where he wrote and drew *Jinx*, *Fire*, and *AKA Goldfish* through the nineties before moving to Image, where he launched the superhero police comic book Powers. After working for Todd McFarlane, writing *Hellspawn* and *Sam And Twitch*, he was headhunted by Joe Quesada and Bill Jemas to work on their new Ultimate line of comics. Revamping *Spider-Man* brought him a whole new audience and the book became a resounding success.

His subsequent work on *Daredevil* and other Marvel projects made him a respected name, while Powers became the best-selling Image title, before he took that to Marvel. He revamped the *Avengers*, with a long run that culminated in this summer's *Avengers Vs X-Men* event, while still creating new creator owned work such as Takio and Brilliant – and something big and surprising expected for January.

Bendis can sell a series to retailers and his influence is unparalleled at Marvel for creative. His *Ultimate Spider-Man* still grabs the headlines, as he relaunched the character as a young blatino student. But it's all this involvement in the Marvel films, games, TV shows, while simultaneously innovating new creator owned work that marks out his real power in the industry.

Next year's position depends upon: Taking a non-superhero into the top ten.

07 DAN DIDIO

The public face of DC Comics, Dan DiDio entered the company in an unusual way, as a Warner Bros executive who started co-writing Superboy with Jimmy Palmiotti. Learning the business from the bottom up, he quickly became an executive at DC with Warners' full backing. Working under Paul Levitz, he was very much a new broom – and it's one that ended up sweeping Levitz out of the door. The big revamp at DC saw DiDio promoted further to Co-Publisher and allowed him to do the one thing he'd been pushing for years, a complete revamp of the DC Universe from the bottom up.

It was a dazzling success and is credited with both saving the publisher and lifting the entire market, and he has been very involved with the micromanaging of titles in an attempt to keep all the plates spinning. His twisting and turning as an executive combines with his showman appeal, taking the stand at conventions, and inviting questions from all. Following the Joe Quesada example, he's become a strong face of the company to the fans, and the DC Nation TV show and editorial branding continues to exacerbate that. He may be knocked down by Diane Nelson from time to time, but he's in comics for the long term. He really, really wants to be here.

Next year's position depends upon: Working out what follows *Before Watchmen* and *Sandman Zero*...

Photo Credit: DC

08 THOMAS TULL

Founder, Chairman, and CEO at Legendary Films – and Legendary Comics. On one hand, Thomas Tull is the geek mastermind-ing the big Warners movie success of the Christopher Nolan Batman films, and now the Man Of Steel relaunch. On the other, he's the man behind the Tower Chronicles, Holy Terror, and more Legendary comic books spinning out from his company's properties. Who else is quite so involved in his company's movies and in their comics simultaneously?

With Batman comics sales through the roof, and reflecting more and more the Nolan films, and rumours of DC looking to put out a high profile new Man Of Steel book next year, Tull's ability to convince everyone else that the geek outlook is the right one make him a formidable force in comics as well as in films. And projects such as 300 and Watchmen, as well as the comic book lookalikes of *Sucker Punch* and *Clash Of The Titans,* define his commitment to using comics to redefine media in general. Buying out Nerdist is only part of the geekocracy he is building through the company. He probably won't be happy until everything looks like a comic book.

And odds are we'll be pretty happy with that.

Next year's position depends upon: DC deciding to give him control over everything else in their back catalogue.

Photo Credit: Legendary

09 **KEVIN FEIGE** Marvel Studios big go-to-guy for all their movies.

Beginning as an Associate Producer for the first X-Men film, his credits have built with each movie until Kevin Feige became President of Production at Marvel Studios. The man behind the creation of the Marvel Movie Universe, he is credited with finding the easiest path from comics to screen for a ton of Marvel comic book characters. And in doing so, he has given their films something very new and previously unseen at this level: a cross franchise cinematic continuity, which makes even the worst of his films a must-see for so many fans, looking for the next chapter to obsess about. Which, in turn, also lets him take more risks with casting, directing, and even the characters they choose.

He's also trying to get a public profile; doing the press, the interviews, the conventions – especially D23. Just as the comics affect his work, so his work affects the comics. His whims have a tendency to find themselves reflected in the next Marvel year-long crossover.

And he's one of the most influential voices in the decision making process, with a full plate ahead of him for the next decade at least.

Next year's position depends upon: Not going the way of Avi Arad.

10 **ERIC STEPHENSON** Rising through the ranks as editorial assistant, writer and editor, via Rob Liefeld's Extreme Comics, Eric Stephenson was made publisher of Image Comics. Always a relatively powerful position, Stephenson managed to take it to new heights, while remaining independent from the rest of the Image Comics founders. As a result, he has now placed himself as the most powerful cool-hunter in the comic book industry. He has a track record in picking the right comic by the right creator at the right time and seeing them blossom as a result. And he managed to pull mainstream comic creators from their Marvel and DC teat and offer them the ability to create great new comics to work on, and profit from their success. He has repeatedly taken people with no previous published comics, put their work at the front of the Diamond Previews catalogue, committed to them from one series to the next, and kick-started their careers into comic book superstardom from nothing. His power comes completely from his position, but it's one he has used to better the industry and garner great loyalty as a result.

Photo Credit: Image Comics

Whatever he does next, he could take an awful lot of people in the comic book industry with him.

Next year's position depends upon: Keeping his job.

11 MARK MILLAR One of the greatest rises in the comics industry is that of Mark Millar, by his own bootstraps lifting himself from a junior co-writer for Grant Morrison to one of the biggest comics media players going. With his Millarworld line of creator owned comics published by Marvel and Image, he has a strong history of turning them into films, games, and merchandise, especially with Wanted and Kick Ass.

Initially playing the game of using tame journalists to hype up an image of him that eventually became true, Millar built himself a career ladder out of nothing and climbed right up it, each rung lifting him to the next in an unparalleled example of media manipulation. His generosity with artists has also seen them clamour to work with him and gain success and co-ownership in the process.

The most Machiavellian comics creator, there seems little to stop him. He has a comics convention in Kapow, a newstand magazine in Clint which continually republishes his work, and remains friends with the great and good in Hollywood. Also, his political links in supporting the current Scottish government saw Millar thanked by the First Minister in his electoral victory speech and it's widely believed the socialist Millar may have political office in his future. If he can spare the time from writing, that is.

Next year's position depends upon: The *Supercrooks* film actually getting made, and *Jupiter's Children* actually coming out.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

12 DAVID STEINBERGER CEO of ComiXology, the leading digital comics distribution service working with Marvel, DC, Image, IDW, hell, pretty much everybody. His role is partly a facilitator of his clients' wishes, but where ComiXology goes, the industry is now following.

Even those who don't sign up to ComiXology are in the business of comparing their business to his. The individual website presence for existing comic book stores have also given ComiXology a new bricks and mortar power base as well, shifting the distribution away from Diamond Comic Distributors, even on their home ground. And as more and more comics go day-and-date digital, and more and more people buy electronic readers, so more and more of the market comes under his domain.

A relatively benign dictator so far, nevertheless his power to affect the spread of comics content is massive and verging on the monopolistic. The future industry battles over content, sales, royalties, and whether or not a comic creator even needs a publisher, will be in his hands. It's a good thing he's such a nice guy.

For now.

Next year's position depends upon: Whether the comics industry goes more digital or not. Top Ten next year then.

Photo Credit: ComiXology

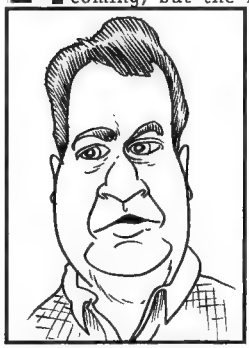
13 DAN BUCKLEY He's the publisher of Marvel Comics and COO of Marvel Entertainment's publishing division. Dan Buckley keeps his public profile on the down low these days. A Marvel suit from the old days, he moved into marketing, but kept on good drinking terms with the rest of the Marvel crew in the Brooklyn Bizarro bar-crawling days. He's a teetotaller these days though.

So when previous President and Publisher Bill Jemas needed taking down a peg or two and Marvel wanted someone reliable that they could trust, back came Buckley, pushing Jemas down a couple of notches before saying goodbye to him forever and exiling the likes of Gui Kayro in the process.

Outside of the Marvel offices he remains best known for wearing a chicken hat. Inside Marvel, he's best known for being The Decider, the figure who will either approve projects or kick others into touch. He also gains serious kudos for keeping everything running, and often publishing comics on two twigs and a piece of string, after one of Perlmutter's economy drives, and keeping the Marvel bullpen working, and working with Disney. Often to be found double teaming with Joe Quesada.

Next year's position depends upon: Somebody noticing what he's doing and headhunting him for glory.

14 BOB HARRAS Few people saw this coming, but the revival of Bob Harras' fortunes has been spectacular.



Editor-in-chief of Marvel at a time of great upheavel, he was key to delivering the more ludicrous demands of his then bosses, and launched amongst other projects, the best-selling American comic of all time, X-Men #1 drawn by Jim Lee. After the bankruptcy saw a new team gain dominance at the publisher, he was summarily fired and replaced by Joe Quesada. Little was heard of him for some time, until he emerged at Jim Lee's Wildstorm Studios in a relatively minor role. When DC bought Wildstorm, Bob Harras came along for the ride and began working in the DC archive, biding his time. When DC reformed and Jim Lee became co-publisher, he appointed Bob Harras as Editor-In-Chief. Seen as a rather boring safe pair of hands at the time, Harras has become far more hands on than the puppet figure some were expecting. He also took direct control over DC Vertigo, something denied previous DC editor-in-chiefs, and brought in a bunch of his old colleagues, from Scott Lobdell to Bobbie Chase to Howard Mackie to Tom DeFalco. His involvement in almost every book of the DC relaunch has become the reason some have left, but he also has used his Marvel crossover skills to keep the storylines of the DC Universe relatively coherent, on time, and on schedule.

Next year's position depends upon: The continued success of the relaunch.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

15 AXEL ALONSO Not as confident as Joe Quesada, publicly at least, Axel

Alonso not so much filled Joe's role as editor-in-chief when it was vacated, but it was recognised that it was a role he practically did anyway before it was made official.

A Vertigo Comics editor, he was originally used as a bit of a trophy wife for Marvel Comics, a way to taunt them across the barricades. But he was instrumental in bringing in the kind of talent that did well on creator owned books at other companies, and pinning the future of the comic book publisher on them.

From Ed Brubaker to Brian K Vaughan to Brian Azzarello to Matt Fraction to Jonathan Hickman to Nick Spencer to Kelly Sue DeConnick to Jason Aaron, as well as traditionally crime fiction writers such as Duane Swierczynski and Victor Gischler and creating the Marvel mature readers MarvelMAX line for just such people, Alonso has sought out and championed the people who now write the best-selling superhero comics in the industry while still supporting their work on the books that brought them to his attention in the first place.

Eric Stephenson at Image Comics sets them up, Axel Alonso reels them in...

Next year's position depends upon: Public speaking lessons.

16 JOSS WHEDON Creator and writer of TV series *Buffy*, *Angel*, *Firefly* and *Dollhouse*, Joss Whedon has taken all these TV series and turned them into comics, regularly writing them himself and turning Buffy into often the most successful non-Marvel/DC

book in the store. He's a hit on any comic he touches right now – and can pretty much get any comic he wants. And every now and then, he does seem to want them.

But more importantly right now, he wrote and directed *The Avengers*, the most important Marvel movie to date, which has affected much of Marvel's output in 2012, and will do for 2013, as well. Just one glimpse of Thanos, and you can't move for all the comics starring the purple tyrant.

And now he has got himself snapped by Marvel Studies on an exclusive basis to work on future film and television series for the company. A tragedy for those who want more *Dr Horrible* or *Cabin In The Woods*, but a boom for anyone who wanted people to take superhero comics and films seriously. Because nothing says serious like the billion dollars *Avengers* raked in, his *Buffy* licensed comics for Dark Horse also regularly top the charts and bring a new audience to the medium. And he's also a fan. A heady combination there.

Next year's position depends upon: *SHIELD* being just as kick ass.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

Photo Credit: Gage Skidmore

17 TOM BREVOORT Working at Marvel since he became an intern in 1989, he

rose the hard way as assistant editor, then editor. Brevoort is considered the oldest of the old guard of Marvel Comics. His recent elevation to Executive Editor and Senior Vice President of Publishing sticks in the craw of certain hardcore fans who still hold out hope he'll revert to the "old way of doing things." It's not going to happen, Tom is as New Marvel as anyone, with New Avengers, Civil War and Johny Storm's death under his belt.

His role is second to Axel Alonso's, and many see him as the obvious choice for EIC if Alonso steps down. He has a slightly lower public profile at conventions but makes up for it with a vast comic book knowledge, a sense of self-deprecation and a dedication to delivering Formspring answers in an engaging fashion to the fans, making him one of the more accountable figures in high position at Marvel Comics. Though he does demonstrate a bit of a temper which can get flipped on certain occasions.

Next year's position depends upon: Not letting Twitter drive him insane.

18 GRANT MORRISON One of the British new wave of comics writers

in the eighties and nineties, he's actually been working in comics for a decade before that. But it was his work on Batman: Arkham Asylum that took this purveyor of surrealist superheroics and made him a heavily commercial bet as Morrison then continued to create increasingly bizarre works, but then took that bizarreness, and the cult following he'd gained and injected them both into mainstream comics.

Relaunching the Justice League Of America as JLA in the nineties and taking the book back to the number one slot, he was grabbed by Marvel to do the same to the X-Men title ten years later. Given carte blanche to change the book, he brought a sales spike and new interest to the title. And then when he fell out with Marvel did the same to DC again, revitalising their universe of characters, contributing to the movies and making Batman and Superman cool again. In the DC Universe, he is the only writer who has been given editorial freedom to do what he likes. And now he has films on the way, a documentary about himself, a comic convention of his own, and the following of a rock star to play with. He is the first god of comics.

Next year's position depends upon: Whether Don Murphy can get the *We3* movie off the ground.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

19 MIKE RICHARDSON The tallest man in comics, especially on a windy day when his shock of white hair flies up, Mike Richardson is the original independent multi-media success story in comics.

In the last thirty years as publisher of Dark Horse Comics, he's had more comics turned into films than any other. From The Mask to Hellboy to Sin City to 300 to.. um, Timecop. He's championed that rare creature in comics, the commercial auteur, in Mike Mignola, Sergio Aragones, Stan Sakai, Frank Miller, and more. He's turned the comics license into a commercial backbone that many try to copy with Buffy, Star Wars, and Conan.

Oh yes, and he owns Dark Horse outright. The biggest comic book publisher in America still owned by one man. They are also pursuing their own separate digital comics strategy rather than giving away share to a third party, so he stays in control of that side as well. And he insists on decent personal producer fees on all those movies, so it's not like he'll be in the poor house soon either. Richardson also owns the comic store and website Things From Another World, which has a sizable online presence.

Next year's position depends upon: Deciding whether or not to sell up and buy a small island.

Photo Credit: Dark Horse Comics

20 BILL SCHANES He may not be the most senior employee at the company, but as Purchasing VP of Diamond Comics Distributors, Bill Schanes is very much in charge of the day-to-day running of the largest comics book distributor in the English speaking world. He's also the final say on what book does or doesn't get distributed and can change decisions on a whim. His support for a book, even when the sales don't justify the distribution of it, has saved a number of books and given them the chance to grow and justify their existence in the future. Or, condemn them, depending on his mood. He's the man who, day-by-day, with decades of experience, keeps the wheels of the comic book industry turning, despite all the pressures that may stop him. And the exclusive nature of Diamond's big contracts means that where Diamond goes, the industry follows, even as the digital age threatens to change things. Bill really needs to download himself into something, just in case a large case of Absolute volumes falls on top of his head.

Next year's position depends upon: Whether Diamond Digital can gain any ground against ComiXology.

Photo Credit: Diamond Comic Distributors

21 BOB WAYNE A man who managed to get two of his bosses fired while taking their jobs, Bob Wayne is the true survivor and prosperor in comics. Senior VP Sales at DC, he remains a retailer at heart and knows more about the direct comics market than most anyone, maintaining its trust. One of the more Machiavellian operators in the industry, he will one day retire to Texas and write his tell-all book.

Photo Credit: DC

22 JEPH LOEB Comic book fan from a young age, Jeph Loeb found success as a screenwriter, with Teen Wolf and Commando. After writing comics for DC, he combined the experience of both fields to write for and produce Smallville, then Lost and Heroes. Head-hunted by Marvel, he became their newly created Executive Vice President, Head of Television, creating animated and live action TV work, while continuing to write high profile comics for Marvel.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

23 RUWAN JAYATILLEKE Associate Publisher & SVP, Print, Animation and Digital Media at Marvel, he has many jobs. Driving Marvel's licensing globally and making deals of which many are incredibly envious. The key contact between Marvel and Disney publishing, keeping Marvel autonomous. All these responsibilities then cross over with what Marvel actually produce to fill all these needs. He may be one of the most powerful people in the industry you haven't heard of.

24 JONAH WEILAND Heading the successful Comic Book Resources, Jonah also runs the servers that host other comics sites. Running a mix of genial commentary, interviews and reviews, CBR has become the site the comics publishers love to deal with, knowing they will not be bitten on the bottom. He owns the whole thing lock stock and barrel and he's got a boat at San Diego Comic Con. The show comes to him.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

25 **TED ADAMS** The powerhouse behind IDW, publishing a heady mix of franchise licenses, book adaptations and comics with a potential for mass-media exploitation, such as 30 Days Of Night and Locke & Key. IDW was formed by people who worked for Wildstorm, and wanted to keep that independent spirit after the publisher was sold to DC Comics. And IDW President Ted has had a tendency to hire people fired by DC as a result.

Photo Credit: Paula Beerman

26 **JEFF ROBINOV** It's not like DC takes the majority of his time as Film Group President of Warner Bros. But he set up Diane Nelson at DC, triggered the company's big change into DC Entertainment and is the man who will ultimately either promote everybody involved or get someone else to sign their pink slips. More specifically, he has the green light power to decide which movies get made with a $2 to $3 billion a year budget.

Photo Credit: DC

27 **STAN LEE** Possibly the best known person working in comic books, Stan Lee reached his creative height in the sixties, working with Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. However that hasn't stopped him using the massive branding appeal from his time at Marvel to add credence and publicity to all manner of projects from other publishers. In fact it's one of the easiest ways to get coverage as Archie, Boom, 1821 and more have discovered of late.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

28 **NEIL GAIMAN** Hired by DC on a wave of British signings, Sandman was the first of Vertigo's 'breakout' titles, books that would find mainstream appeal as novels in serialised form. Now Gaiman's novel, film and TV work has created a new audience for all his comics, and the maturing of the industry has seen what was once a 'cult' name become mainstream in a way only 'outsiders' have achieved otherwise. And now he's returning for Sandman Zero, Marvelman.... and more.

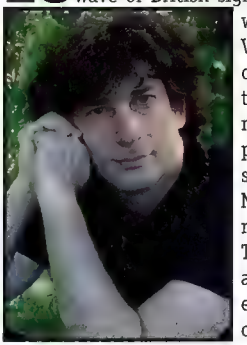


Photo Credit: Kyle Cassidy

29 **DIANE NELSON** Ripped from her Warner Bros job between Harry Potter fans and JK Rowling, Diane Nelson was perfectly suited to deal with the rampaging hordes of DC Universe readers and execs. President of DC Entertainment, she was key to the restructure of DC Comics, although her star has waned in the light of Alan Horn's departure at Warners. With Before Watchmen and the We Can Be Heroes charity, she is the one pushing DC to grow in all sorts of ways.

Photo Credit: DC

30 **ALAN MOORE** Commonly regarded as the greatest writer in the comic medium, from Marvelman to V to Swamp Thing to Watchmen to Lost Girls to LoEG to From Hell to Neonomicon, he constantly reinvents himself and the medium, before getting angry with his publisher. Only Top Shelf, Knockabout and Avatar have remained unscathed. His power would be greater if he worked with the major superhero characters. His work is stronger for the fact he doesn't.

Photo Credit: Nikki Tysoe

31 **NICK LOWE** Basically, Marvel's X-Men senior editor, he's responsible for the comic industry's most consistently popular superhero franchise, splitting off into many books, imprints, continuities and characters. An intern at Marvel while Joe Quesada was running Marvel Knights, he has ascended with Joe into the publisher. And he took over the role when Axel Alonso was promoted. It may be the power of the position, but it's a hell of a position to have.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

32 **DAVID GABRIEL** Senior Vice President of Sales at Marvel. David is the symmetrical equivalent to Bob Wayne at DC Comics, just with slightly less secrets of the industry in his closet. Famously, he's also responsible for reintroducing vampires back to Marvel for a new monthly X-Men book. He's in charge of sales and with editorial input... a dangerous combination, that gives him a leap up on others.

33 BRIAN K VAUGHN Comics and TV writer, Vaughn has worked on DC and Marvel properties, but it is his own works for which he is most lauded, Y The Last Man, Ex Machina, Pride Of Baghdad, and Saga, Image's biggest debut for many years. Incredibly picky on what he works on, he can add sales and gravitas to a new comic book work like few around him. He commands respect in comics, and in television, as well.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

34 NICK BARRUCCI Publisher of Dynamite Entertainment, he specialises in publishing media adaptations such as Green Hornet and Game Of Thrones as well as being heavily involved in registering intellectual property rights and trademarks in public domain properties. Uniquely, he's also a publisher that Marvel will work with, due to his exclusive relationship with artist Alex Ross that others have been unable to break.

35 WILLIAM CHRISTENSEN Publisher of Avatar Press, he's the only publisher that the three big names Alan Moore, Warren Ellis and Garth Ennis will all work for, with projects that it would be hard to see placed at other publishers. He owns and publishes the Bleeding Cool website and magazine. And while he has innovated offering free serialised webcomics, he has held out on any kind of digital distribution deal. Until now...

Photo Credit: Avatar Press

36 JASON KINGSLEY Owner of software company Rebellion, Kingsley liked 2000AD so much he bought it, along with the Judge Dredd Magazine, as well as all rights to the comic's library of work. They create the greatest amount of original comic book pages in the UK, hundreds of pages a month, with the largest bank of comic book creators, and for many, they are the be-all and end-all of the comic book industry.

Photo Credit: Jon Jordan

37 ALEX ROSS After the publication of Marvels, Alex Ross became an instant A-list creator. Picking his projects occasionally, his photo-realistic painted comics work is highly prized by many publishers. An outspoken mind, Ross has made a number of enemies, but few would resist the fanbase he's developed through his DC iconic work, AlexRoss.com and his Dynamite covers. He can take characters that few people care about and give it a realistic vision that demands a second look.

Photo Credit: Alex Ross

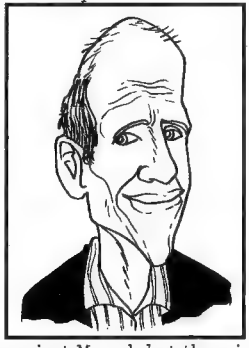
38 STEVE WACKER The DC editor who put the weekly 52 comic book out on time, was then snatched by Marvel to do the same for their three-times-a-week Amazing Spider-Man. Since then he's truly embedded himself at Marvel and become a public face for the company. His willingness to talk to fans, defend the company's practices, and specifically the people working for Marvel as he takes on the trolls across the net, has garnered him a following denied most editors.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

39 PENDLETON WARD An American animator for Cartoon Network Studios, he created Adventure Time and Bravest Warriors, the former of which became a smash hit comic book for BOOM! Studios, which regularly sells thousands of copies at comic conventions alone and has bolstered their company. Pendleton's involvement in the comics, with Bravest Warriors on the way, has been strong and has supported the recruitment of web comic creators to take on the books.

Photo Credit: Cartoon Network

40 MARC TOBEROFF Hollywood producer and attorney, Toberoff is best known in comics for his legal cases against DC and Marvel on behalf of the estates of Siegel and Schuster, and Jack Kirby, respectively. He may have failed with Jack Kirby's estate against Marvel, but there is plenty of room for appeal. The verdicts could affect whether or not Marvel or DC have the right to continue publishing their most popular of comic books – and movies.



Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

41 CB CEBULSKI Senior VP Talent Relations, CB has turned this position into an art form. Travelling the world, blogging as he goes, he's become the international face of Marvel Comics. He glad hands foreign nationals while keeping an eye out for portfolios of comic creators feted in their own country but unknown in the English speaking world. And grabs them for Marvel, with considerable success to date.

Photo Credit: Rob Guillory

42 MICAH BALDWIN A small start-up company in Britain called Take Comics with a digital comics reader was grabbed by venture capitalists, transported across the ocean, and re-branded as Graphic. Ly. Playing catch up to ComiXology, CEO Micah Baldwin bought the iFanboy social network and embedded it in the reader while launching new digital comics services that many find valuable and reinventing digital distribution.

Photo Credit: Joi Ito

43 ROB PEREYDA Head of Bandai NAMCO's Shiftylook, this new company is adapting old console games into new comics and animation, and using a bunch of decent creative talent in the process. With a massive budget and excellent taste, they have made a major splash in the comics industry, seemingly overnight. And Rob Pereyda with editorial control gets to pick and choose from all his favourite creators.

Photo Credit: Rob Pereyda

44 NICK LANDAU Owner of the Forbidden Planet chain and the publishers Titan Books and Titan Magazines would make Nick Landau powerful enough, but it's his work with Mark Millar that has seen him gain even greater prominence of late by investing in Mark Millar's movies, funding the Kapow convention, and publishing CLiNT Magazine. It's an investment that continues to pay off.

Photo Credit: Titan Publishing Group

45 MARK WAID A big name in comics for decades as an editor at

Fantagraphics and DC, editor-in-chief at BOOM! and a writer currently bringing acclaim and awards to Marvel for his work on Daredevil, it's as a digital publisher that has seen him rise up the list. Launching Thrillbent and innovating digital comics means that the industry is hanging on his word. Especially as he has a tendency to zig when others zag.

Photo Credit: Lori Matsumoto

46 TODD MCFARLANE Founder of Image Comics, while his star may have faded since the nineties, Todd McFarlane still has a sizeable following in comics, in toys, in games, in animation. His influence can be still seen across the industry, even if the books he creatively manages no longer sell as they used to. But even a whiff of a pen line on a cover can draw attention and the major comic publishers would give their first borns for him to work for them again.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

47 ROSS RICHIE Editor-in-chief, and sole publisher of BOOM! Studios,

BOOM! continues to publish a mixture of original and licensed work with an eye to future media exploitation. Losing the Disney licence reduced its reach, and the company was in trouble, but getting the Adventure Time license turned everything round. And now he's making movies with his first film 2 Guns to open next year.

Photo Credit: BOOM!

48 SCOTT SNYDER Relative newcomer to comics, getting Stephen King to co-write his Vertigo series American Vampire showed nous, one that rewarded him with the New 52 relaunch and gave him the keys to Batman, a comic he took to the top of the charts to critical acclaim, along with Swamp Thing and now Talon. Considered by many the heir apparent to Geoff Johns... If he wants to be.

Photo Credit: Rick Verbanas

49 BILL WILLINGHAM Comic book creator on the margins for years, after his long running indie superhero comic, Elementals, he found himself writing miniseries and spin-off books for DC Vertigo. This changed with Fables, a rewriting of classic fairy tale characters in a modern setting, and creating Vertigo's only exploitable franchise these days, spinning off into more comics, novels, games, and toys while TV and movies reflect the influence of the series.

Photo Credit: Bill Willingham

51 JONATHAN HICKMAN Creating some amazing, nay revolutionary, comic books for Image (and still is), Hickman was picked by Marvel and given the keys to the Fantastic Four. Making it a popular comic again, he was named one of the Marvel Architects and now has Avengers to work with. But also he is key in guiding new creative talent into publication.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

50 JMS Creator of *Babylon 5*, Joe Michael Straczynski is a comics fan who turned his TV profile into a comics career. He'd written a few comics before, but his success saw him headhunted by Marvel to relaunch *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Thor*. Sales boomed on both, but he jumped ship for DC and the *Earth One* OGN line, again bucking sales expectations. All the time while juggling his screenplays, including *Thor* and launching a new line of comics at Image.

Photo Credit: Joe Michael Straczynski

52 JOHN ROOD The Executive VP of Sales at DC Comics is a Warners plant. But with a tattoo of the state of Texas on his ankle, and a penchant for ending up on viral sports videos, John has pretty much the ear of the industry, is considered a fun guy to hang out with but also a very serious man when it comes to business. His whim can twist and turn DC Comics and the industry. You know Alec Baldwin in 30 Rock? He's basically that.

Photo Credit: DC

53 GARTH ENNIS Writer of a series of creator-owned comics about men doing manly things (and even a few women doing them too) for Marvel, DC, Image and Dynamite, it's his Crossed series for Avatar that has grown beyond him into a franchise, with films in the works and a ton of projects ahead. And able to persuade the staid, sensible people at Marvel Comics to publish treasonous filth while they're at it.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

54 MATT FRACTION The new writer of the Avengers comics, Fraction is Marvel's major wunderkind. Recruited from the independent press where he made a big name for himself and his comics, he continues to give indie cred to the corporate work he produces. Married to fellow Marvel and Image writer, Kelly Sue DeConnick, he has become another mentor at Marvel for new and upcoming talent.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

55 MIKE MIGNOLA Creator of Hellboy, Mike Mignola has developed this character into a line of comics, toys, games and films, outshining many of his contemporaries. A large fanbase is guaranteed to follow him wherever he goes, from comics like BPRD to animation like Atlantis and The Amazing Screw-On Head and movies like Bram Stoker's Dracula. Time to revisit his old Rocket Raccoon series?

Photo Credit: 5of7

56 MIKE MARTS Editor of the Batman line of comic books at DC, Mike Marts has control over the biggest franchise at the company and (currently) its best-selling title. A year on into the New 52, it's the Batman group of books that has put on new titles, Batman Inc and Talon, without losing one. At this rate, Marts will edit everything at DC soon... and every comic will have a Bat in it.

Photo Credit: DC

57 STEVE GEPPI Nicknamed the Postmaster General, Steve Geppi owns

outright the Diamond Comic Distributors which has a monopoly on distributing Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, Image, IDW and more publishers to the direct market of comic stores in the US, Canada and the UK. And while he does not concern himself with the day to day running of the company, his whims can still have a major effect on the comics you are able to buy – and where you can buy them.

Photo Credit: Rick Verbanas

58 SCOTT KURTZ One of the biggest mouths in webcomics, Scott Kurtz all

but pioneered turning the art form into a living, with PVP. He did so while keeping himself embedded in the comics industry, putting out print comics, doing the convention circuit, and spinning the comic off into toys, games, and entire lifestyle. A controversial character, he is still the yardstick many measure themselves against.

Photo Credit: 5of7

59 THE ANONYMOUS COMIC SHOP CLERK WITH A SCANNER Every

Wednesday, like clockwork, comics are made available for online download illegally. Sometimes even before then. And while the digital market has taken away some of the skill, craftsmanship and organisation to get so many comics online so quickly, getting them ahead of sale date is still quite an advantage... and causes much hair tearing across the industry.

60 KAREN BERGER Executive Editor of DC Vertigo, the imprint has faded

of late as Image Comics has stolen a lead on the kind of creator-controlled books they would normally publish, and the DC reorganisation took the franchise characters away from the imprint and seniority from Karen Berger. But the arrival of Sandman Zero, after agreeing with Neil Gaiman's demands, may change that next year. There are many who owe her their careers who will not forget.

Photo Credit: DC

61 MIDTOWN COLLECTIVE So hard to split Gahl, Gerry, Thor and the gang, but Midtown Comics has rapidly become the most media friendly comic store in the USA. Based in New York, in close proximity to the main publishers, their attention to publicity has ensures that it's where the comic industry shops more than any other store - and reaction from Midtown staffers and owners makes it back to the publishers more than any other as well.

Photo Credit: Midtown Comics

62 FRED PIERCE Ex-President and COO of Wizard, now publisher of Valiant Entertainment, Fred Pierce has the rare ability to be able to pick up a phone, get through to someone from his vast range of contacts, and get things done. Quickly, efficiently, pulling in favours he has spent a lifetime building up. Much of the remarkable recent Valiant success is down to retailers putting their trust in him.

Photo Credit: Rick Verbanas

63 ROGER FLETCHER VP Sales and Marketing of Diamond Comic Distributors, Roger Fletcher is the man at the company behind the existence of Free Comic Book Day, the new Hallowe'en giveaway promotions that stores are setting up now, as well as successfully pulling Diamond out of the mire it had sunk into a couple of years ago. He is probably responsible for helping to save the current direct market. No biggie...

Photo Credit: Diamond Comic Distributors

64 BOBBIE CHASE An ex-Marvel editor-in-chief, she went to ground after she was let go, to work on Pony magazines. That was until a fellow ex-Marvel editor-in-chief Bob Harras recruited her at DC to be his second, and she now has the role of Editorial Director, one she uses in quite a hands on fashion. She brings with her devotion from a number of creators both at Marvel and now DC and a fierce dedication to the industry. And a bit of a temper to match.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

65 **DAVID BOGART** Senior Vice President of Business Affairs and Talent Management at Marvel Comics, David Bogart is key to how the publisher operates and the work that gets produced. Headhunted a decade ago when he was Editor-In-Chief of Harris Comics, he also headhunted me to write about comics in the first place for Next Planet Over at the end of the nineties. I am, quite literally, his fault.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

66 **DINESH SHAMDASANI** CCO and Founder of Valiant Entertainment, who has made a splash with incredibly high sales for a line of comics that many had simply given up on. But hiring a fast, lean and efficient team has seen the new upstart outdo its rivals repeatedly. And his film history has kept titles like Bloodshot in the eye of Hollywood. Success in that field may see his influence rise.

Photo Credit: Rick Verbanas

67 **WARREN ELLIS** Ellis changed the face of two companies - Wildstorm from nineties superhero to dark tongue-in-cheek deconstructionalists. And Avatar, a soft-core porn publisher, now a publisher of big name literary horror. With almost all superhero titles having to recognise if not imitate his Authority work, Ellis' influence on his peers and successors is immense, even as he extends his work outside the medium.

Photo Credit: Ellen Rogers

68 **JIM VALENTINO** His Image book Shadowhawk may be less high profile now, and many have forgotten his earlier slice of life work and Normalman superhero parody, but his main claim to fame right now is finding comics, developing them and publishing them through his co-founded company Image Comics. There's no quicker way to get to front of Previews prominence for a new comic creator than by impressing Jim Valentino.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

69 **HARRIS MILLER III** Los Angeles legal representative and agent for a gamut of creators, from Ed Brubaker to Peter David, Frank Miller to Howard Chaykin, to Jonathan Ross, Harris makes the big multi-media deals and cleans up a decent percentage of the deal. He has become a master at taking the obscure book and finding a big market for it, and a payday for all those involved.

Photo Credit: Pond5

70 **JOE FIELD** Owner of the award-winning Flying Colors store in Northern California, might make him a contender for this list, but two other aspects top that. Joe is president of ComicsPRO, the professional organisation for comic stores, that works as an advocate for the industry and is responsible for a number of measures that have benefited the direct market. And he is also the inventor of Free Comic Book Day.

Photo Credit: Joe Field

71 **MARC SILVESTRI** Marc Silvestri took his success drawing X-Men and Wolverine for Marvel to form Image Comics, famous for the likes of Cyberforce, Witchblade and Darkness. As CEO of Top Cow, he is the publisher within a publisher at Image Comics. Specialising in female action titles and licensed work, he still draws comics for Marvel and is now finding new ways to innovate and publish comics with social funding.

Photo Credit: Top Cow

72 **MIMI CRUZ** Owner of the Night Flight comic stores in Salt Lake City, Mimi is in rather a unique position. She has two stores, one in a general shopping area, another inside the central Salt Lake City library. This has given her a direct relationship with libraries and supplies comics and graphic novels to thousands of libraries nationwide. Who often take her recommendation and direction...

Photo Credit: Paul Guinan

73 **CINDY FOURNIER** VP of Operations at Diamond Comic Distributors,

Cindy is an old school distributor, working for Bud Plant before Diamond bought it up, with a ten year history at McDonald's as well. She was instrumental in some of the changes that Diamond has been making to date, including the move to the Olive Branch mega-warehouse as well as Diamond Digital. She has comics, and getting them around the world, in her bones.

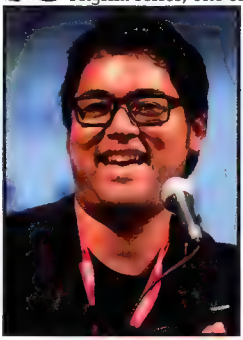
Photo Credit: Diamond Comic Distributors

74 **CHUCK PARKER** Exec VP and COO of Diamond, and their first Controller, if

Chuck actually cared about comic books, he'd be higher, but he's just as likely to move into fish supplies next. A steady hand on the tiller, more likely to be conservative than progressive in his outlook, he resisted digital at the company more than most before allowing Diamond Digital to go ahead. But for those who value the printed work, Chuck is their messiah.

Photo Credit: Diamond Comic Distributors

75 **BRYAN LEE O'MALLEY** His Scott Pilgrim series, one of the best-selling



comic books in bookstores of the past two years, is only beaten by The Walking Dead. Boosted by the film, it's still been an incredible seller for a book whose first issue, if published today, would have sold so few copies as to have not been distributed by Diamond. His next book is called Seconds. It is guaranteed to sell-sell-sell.

Photo Credit: Gage Skidmore

76 **ERIK LARSEN** Founder of Image Comics, he's the only one of the originals who has

stayed writing and drawing their original comic title at the publisher, in Larsen's case *Savage Dragon*. Ex-publisher of the company, he gets very involved in the Image's day-to-day workings, as well as encouraging and helping new talent come in to Image Comics and the industry as a whole. He also co-owns a comic store, which has got to be handy when finding back issues of his own work.

Photo Credit: Rick Verbanas

77 **KEN F LEVIN** Founder of First Comics, and recently involved in bringing them back to life. Whoever isn't legally represented by Harris Miller seems to be represented by Levin. He makes deals for Millar, Ennis, Gaiman, and many more, and is now a comics publisher in his own right, with all the delicious conflicts of interests that might bring. He may not be a star himself, and he tends to shun the spotlight, but he can make stars. Or, at least make stars rather comfortable.

Photo Credit: Pond5

78 **RICHARD JOHNSTON** Writing online gossip on the comics industry online for twenty years, he is shunned by most right thinking publishers, which is why Avatar took him to their bosom. Founder of Bleeding Cool, he runs comics industry stories well ahead of time, reporting on hiring and firings, and has received boycotts, death threats and at least one thumping on the floor of NYCC from comic professionals as a result. Oh, and he writes The Power List.

Photo Credit: Rich Johnston

79 **J SCOTT CAMPBELL** Another artist best known for variant cover appeal is J Scott Campbell, seen by comic book retailers as a real reason to order an extra hundred copies of a comic, just to get one with a cover drawn by him. Rising through Wildstorm, co-creator of Gen 13, it's his creator-owned project Danger Girl that also elevates him in this list, constantly being published, republished, reinvented, waiting for the inevitable movie.

Photo Credit: Luigi Novi

80 **KATE BEATON** Canadian webcomic creator Kate Beaton publishes a new instalment of Hark, A Vagrant every week, and reaps commercial and critical acclaim. She's a poster girl for the successful literary web comic, with the sales and audience to prove it. For those who seek literary justification for the medium, Kate is often their first port of call. The new Art Spiegelman.

Photo Credit: 5of7

81 CHRIS STAROS From an early vanity press, Staros has built Top Shelf into a major independent voice of comics. He continues to hold the line against mediocre comics and pushes work that challenges the medium yet maintains a surprisingly mainstream appeal for new audiences. From Surrogates to From Hell to Owly, Staros is playing the role that Gary Groth and Fantagraphics played in the eighties and nineties. He just happens to be more genial at it.

Photo Credit: Ben Dashwood

82 FAE DESMOND General Manager of the San Diego Comic Con since 1985, Fae Desmond is the woman who makes the whole show work. Formidable but approachable, she makes the impossible happen on a regular basis, dealing with celebrities, studios, publishers, retailers, creators and large boats mooring at the harbour, and making it look as bright and breezy as if she was running a bake sale.

Caricature Credit: Rich Johnston

83 SEIJI HORIBUCHI Chairman of Viz Media, the largest publishers of manga in the US. As an importer and exporter for America and Japan, Seiji Horibuchi found comic stores resistant to manga. Convinced there was a market, he repackaged Japanese work as GNs and went for the bookstores instead, creating a brand new American audience for comics, that the comic store didn't cater to, and Viz still dominates the bookstore market as a result.

Photo Credit: Viz

84 LANCE FESTERMAN The man at show organiser Reed Expo who started the New York Comic Con, Lance Festerman now oversees an entire sector, including both NYCC and C2E2, the two comic conventions that most challenge San Diego Comic Con for media and public dominance. And it seems expansion is on his mind, not only in the USA but overseas.

Photo Credit: Lance Festerman

85 GEORGE RR MARTIN Writer of *A Song Of Fire And Ice*, better known now as *Game Of Thrones*, George RR Martin has few written comics to his name. And while it is the comics adapted from his novels that are doing the business, the real reason he is on this list, is what he has planned for next year. A new line of George RR Martin comics is already making behind-the-scenes impact in the kind of comics we'll be reading next year.

Photo Credit: Gerard Patten

86 GARY GROTH Publisher of Fantagraphics, Groth rose through the fanzines to create a model publisher than many would emulate. Publishing a range of creator owned eclectic material, and The Comics Journal, which held the comics industry's feet to the fire and refused the play the PR game. Now the company concentrates more on translating foreign work and repackaging classic comics. But he still has a mouth on him.

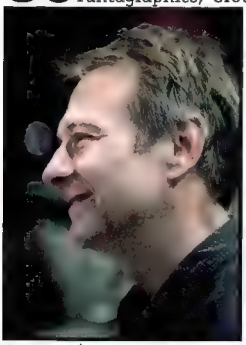


Photo Credit: American Virus Photograpy

87 JONATHAN GOLDWATER The man who took the fuddy duddy old fashioned Archie Comics of his father's company and turned it into a high media profile publisher who constantly hits the headlines with topical, socially relevant issues that transcend its origins, with some decent licenses to match. Never before has Archie Comics been on the tip of so many tongues, and taking advantage of some wonderful supermarket and toy store placement.

Photo Credit: Archie Comics

88 STEPHEN CHRISTY Editor-in-chief at Archaia, Christy has been responsible for attracting and publishing many of the company's most recent critical and commercially successful projects, including the recent hit Jim Henson's Tale In The Sand, as well as masterminding a number of them into multi-media deals. An energetic presence, he has built up much loyalty from creators who will follow him anywhere.

Photo Credit: Archaia

89 **SCOTT ALLIE** Senior Managing Editor at Dark Horse Comics, Scott Allie edits the blockbusters at Dark Horse – Buffy, Hellboy, Conan, and more – but also writes some of them too, as well as Star Wars comics. Seen as second to Mike Richardson at the Portland publisher, with a direct line to Joss Whedon, Guilermo Del Toro, and more, he's also a strong friendly face for the company at shows. He even has a Mini-Me...

Photo Credit: Jessie Christiansen

90 **JAMES LUCAS JONES** Editor-In-Chief of Oni Press, James Lucas Jones is the modern day Gary Groth, heading up a publisher that has pushed the medium, and their creators, and has attracted mainstream media attention without pandering to them either. With films and TV spin-offs aplenty, the publisher remains committed to putting out some seriously great comics, without a toy licence in sight.

Photo Credit: Charlie Chu

91 **SCOTT MORSE** Relatively small indie comic creator known for books such as Magic Pickle and Soulwind, with a history in animation, what Scott Morse brings is contacts. His work with the Pixar crew led to the emergence of The Tr!ckster Bar at San Diego Comic Con, a bohemian celebration of the art form away from the commercial maw – and now it will be open year-round.

Photo Credit: Scott Morse

92 **KEVIN EASTMAN** Co-creator of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, now going through quite the revival, Kevin Eastman also owns and publishes Heavy Metal Magazine. With residences and performances at comic stores and shows, he looks and sounds like the rock star of comic books. And he's still able to use the goodwill engendered by Tundra to get all sorts of people to do all sorts of things for him.

Photo Credit: Rubenstein

93 MILTON GRIEPP The man behind Capital City Distribution, Milton took his Diamond payoff and created ICV2, a resource of information, news and statistics on the comics industry. He also worked with Iconology, dealing with the way digital comic books work and is on the board of Free Comic Book Day. ICV2 also sponsors and created a number of conventions and presentations for the professional community.

Photo Credit: Milton Griepp

94 CHRIS RYALL Editor in chief of IDW, Chris Ryall makes the very important day-to-day commissioning decisions, shaping the way the company looks on a daily basis. Quite a jump from managing Kevin Smith's Movie Poop Shoot website, he deals with precious egos from all sorts of studios, from the BBC to Paramount without breaking a sweat. In public, anyway. He also finds time to write and develop his own franchises in the process.

Photo Credit: IDW

95 JAMES PARKER James is the buyer for the Hastings chain, which recently added comic shop selections to all of its stores, making it overnight the largest comics chain in the direct market. While each store may not buy in bulk, combined, they can buy an awful lot of comics, and commission plenty of variant covers in the process. If James is schmoozed the right way, you could find yourself adding several thousand copies to your print run.

Photo Credit: Hastings

96 SCOTT DUNBIER IDW editor, ex-wives editor and massive comic art dealer, Scott not only knows where the bodies are buried, he's dug them up and made them part of his collection. Innovating the Absolute line at Wildstorm, then DC Comics, he was fired over issues regarding the LoEG. Rescued by Wildstorm friends of IDW, he has now introduced the Artists Edition to IDW, possibly the ultimate presentation format of the comic book. Until his next one.

Photo Credit: Scott Dunbier

97 **LIAM SHARP** British action adventure artist, with decades of work for Marvel and DC as well as pursuing his projects with his own publisher, Mam Tor, Liam Sharp is now the main creator face of new digital motion comics publisher Madefire, innovating new ways to tell comic book stories with a list of A-name creators. And at San Diego they were all queuing up to meet him.

Photo Credit: Liam Sharp

98 **BOB SCHRECK** Famed for being able to get Frank Miller and Kevin Smith to make comics for people, editor Bob Schreck was headhunted by Thomas Tull to launch Legendary Comics, where the first project he brought on was Frank Miller's Holy Terror, and has followed that with recruiting Matt Wagner to develop Tull's Tower Chronicles. He has Hollywood buying power and connections with some of the best creators in the business.

Photo Credit: Legendary

99 **JAMES KILLEN** The buyer at Barnes & Noble and the kind of guy who can, and has, stopped DC selling their top hundred graphic novels in his store. He picks and chooses graphic novels for the entire industry, promotes certain books ahead of others, in print and on the Nook. It is arguable that his role is replaceable, but his experience in the field and knowledge of the form makes him a strong asset to both B&N and the comics industry as a whole.

Photo Credit: Barnes & Noble

100 **HOWARD CHAYKIN** When he's not baiting Customs around the world with sexually explicit comics, Howard is busy creating action adventure comics. But more than that, he has the ear of the industry. Many turn to him for advice and every year he runs workshops for younger comic book professionals looking to improve their skills and marketability. His current sales numbers belie his influence among his peers – and those who wish to join them.

Photo Credit: Ragnarok

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ALICE IN WONDERLAND
A FILM BY TIM BURTON
Disney
FRANKENWEENIE
OCTOBER 5
SEE IT IN SPECTACULAR 3D, real D 3D AND IMAX 3D

TIM BURTON'S GUIDED TOUR OF THE WORLD OF FRANKENWEENIE

by Brendon Connelly

Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* is clearly a very personal film. Made in his new hometown of London, it's set in a fictionalised, miniaturised, stop-motion version of his native Burbank.

Like Burton himself, the lead character, Victor Frankenstein, tragically loses his pet dog at a young age. And also like Burton, he finds a way to bring this inanimate pup to life. But where Victor does it with some heavy stitching, a bolt of lightning, and a little bit of sort-of-not-quite-science ripped from Mary Shelley, Burton does it through the magic of stop motion animation.

I visited the set and took a tour of the many sets while the film was still in production. My incredibly overqualified tour guide was Tim Burton himself. Here is some of what he told me about the making of this wonderful, elaborate world, and the telling of his heartfelt, and typically off-kilter tale.

THE HEART OF FRANKENWEENIE

We're going back into that feeling you know from school. You felt weird yourself, the other kids were weird, your classmates had rivalries. It's like kid politics at a heightened level. That kid you thought was weird in school? We're doing him like Boris Karloff or Peter Lorre. But it's the same classroom dynamics you'll remember. We opened up the story from the short. It's like if you look at *Frankenstein* and then *House of Frankenstein*, you'll see how they took on extra monsters but still kept the tone of what the original was.

And we definitely tried to capture the spirit of my original drawings.

CREATING THE MOOD

There are three moods. When Sparky the dog is alive, when Sparky is dead, and then when Sparky is undead. We have all of the elements, the art direction, and lighting to work in those three moods.

One great thing about stop motion is that we try to light it like it's a real movie. You can see on the set the lighting that you're going to get in the film.

We're spending particular time on that to get it right. We don't want to do a lot of over-tweaking in post production. The only tweaking we'll do is to make sure we've got that classic black and white richness and depth to the image, but we're going for that as much as possible in the original image.

There are some shots where the character is looking through the graveyard with his torch and it's the actual little torch providing the light. Things like that give the shot a certain reality that's hard to get any other way.

The lighting also helps the acting, even when you're acting frame by frame like an animator.

BUILDING NEW AMSTERDAM

Some things we're painting in black and white but some things, like the grass, we're using something you can already get and it comes green. It took testing to get tones that will look right when you watch the film in black and white.

We did a lot of testing to work out what colours, or mostly what shades of grey, everything should be. When you watch it in black and white, the real black and white tones jump out more, and reds jump out more.

What I love is that everybody working on the sets has been so good with little details. You get a crack in the pavement and couple of blades of grass coming up and that, to me, is the beauty of film.

People making things together.

THAT STOP MOTION VIBE

Stop motion techniques have gotten so good that people have confused some recent stop motion with computer animation. Because we love stop motion so much we decided to go for the 'purity' of stop

motion, be more textural and keep that vibe and stop motion feeling.

When you start animating, it takes a while to work out the bugs of the puppets and each one has its own problems and technical issues. It takes a while for everybody to get up to speed.

Some of the puppets are on the key system where we can move the mouth with little alum keys we insert into keyholes in their heads. There will be some replacement pieces too. We're doing a mixture of things depending on what we want to achieve.

Some shots take days, some take a week, and some big ones can take multiple weeks. We rough out the shots first, and the animator will shoot what we call a block—a template or rehearsal for what they're going to do. It's kind of like if you were drawing animation, the block would be the 'extremes' or main poses.

It's always quite surreal when you see animators working away. When you see five people working on a miniature house it's hilarious, really.

THE 3D OPTION

We're not shooting in 3D but it won't be a crappy conversion. If you saw *Nightmare Before Christmas,* that was the conversion that sold me on the process. We took time with it. The thing is, with 3D conversions the key is knowing that you're going to do it and having the time to do it.

I've seen good 3D movies and bad 3D movies, good conversions and crappy conversions. The good thing is that there's a choice. You can either see the film in 3D or not, and to me, that choice is better than no choice.

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THE VINTAGE PAPER CHASE

by Christensen & Seifert

It caught our eye recently that *Newsweek* was calling it quits as a print publication after an 80 year run on the newsstands. It was born at a time when pulps were flourishing and comics were about to make their start. Economic and technological conditions were coming into focus that allowed the businesses of printing, publishing and distributing such magazines, pulps, and comics to take off. The first newsstand comic book series – *Famous Funnies* – started the year after Newsweek was launched in 1933, and *Action Comics* #1 hit the stands just 5 years later in 1938, so as we move forward into the digital era, it's natural to wonder what the latest signs of the digitally changing times will mean for how we view and value the old newsprint and ink periodicals that we hold dear.

The Golden Age

But a comic from the 1930s is a very different thing than an early issue of *Newsweek* or any other vintage magazine (though many vintage magazines can be quite cool in their own right). Comics are not perishable information like news, and what's more, comics storytelling is closely tied to its original format in terms of page layout and what the newsprint of the day was capable of handling. History is important to us in comics; the history of our creators and publishers, the history of our characters – and I think that's very likely to carry over to the history of the format itself as we continue moving into the digital age.

In fact, some very interesting things have happened to the value of vintage comics in the early months of the digital comics era. After nearly a decade of the world record price for a comic book holding at $350,000 (the *Marvel Comics* #1 Pay Copy sold in 2001 for that amount, and a few years later the Edgar Church copy of *Flash Comics* #1 changed hands at the same price), early 2010 saw two different single comic book sales – *Action Comics* #1 CGC 8.0 Kansas City copy, and *Detective Comics* #27 CGC 8.0 Pinnacle Hill copy – jump past the million dollar mark. By the end of 2011, the infamous Nicholas Cage copy of *Action Comics* #1 CGC 9.0 had sold for $2.16 million.

Of course, other very early Superman and Batman appearances also attract lots of attention from high-end collectors. Pre-Robin *Detective Comics* #27-37 have sold at a torrid pace in all grades in recent times, and early *Action Comics* Superman covers such as #7, #10, #13 and #17 have been gaining ground fast as collectors who find that a copy of *Action Comics* #1 is now out of reach in any grade are looking for a more attainable starting point for their

Superman-related collections. An excellent recent example of a low grade comic selling for strong money is the *Action Comics* #10 CGC 3.0 Court Copy going for $45,200 in September 2012.

But it's not all about five, six, and seven-figure prices in the Golden Age market. We're going to go against the grain here and suggest that if you're just getting started in Golden Age collecting, you might consider checking out some cheaper VG to F range raw books from reputable dealers to get a feel for both the market and the comics themselves. For example, if mainstream super-heroes are your thing, you could put together most of a run of *Batman* #20-100 or *Superman* #20-100 for under $600 each in solid low to mid grade raw condition. That's a rewarding run to collect that people will still be collecting for a long time to come.

That aside, it'll hardly come as a revelation to more advanced Golden Age collectors that Pre-Robin *Detectives* and early *Actions* are hot, so we'll be diving into the details of what else is going on with Golden Age – from Centaur to Quality, Archie to Pre-Code Horror and much more in the columns to come.

52 BIG PAGES
BATMAN
DC
BAT-MAN
IS THE CATWOMAN AN ALLY OF THE DYNAMIC DUO OR HAS SHE RETURNED TO CRIME? YOU BE THE JURY TO DECIDE, AS GOTHAM CITY NOMS
THE Empress of the Underworld!
ROGUES GALLERY
UNDERCOVER POLICE AGENTS

The Silver Age

The big buzz in Silver Age in the early part of 2012 was the sale of one of the world's best collections of Silver Age Marvel comics, which had been painstakingly assembled over the past several years by collector/dealer Doug Schmell. The collection included full Silver Age runs of *Fantastic Four, Avengers, X-Men,* and several other Marvel series from the era, all in eye-popping high grade, often representing the best copies available. Though there has been much discussion about the merits of selling the entire collection in a single Heritage Auction – thus putting millions of dollars of high grade Marvels on the market in a two day period – there's no doubt that the overall

auction produced an impressive result and there were several record individual sales, led by the $492,937.50 hammer price of the census topping CGC 9.8 Pac Coast *X-Men* #1.

However, if you're a collector of more modest means who wants to get in on one of the major Silver Age Marvel keys, you could do worse than keep your eyes open for a solid mid to low grade *X-Men* #1 from a reputable dealer. A decent VG-range raw copy can be had for under the $1000-$1200 mark.

One expects the first appearance of a wildly-popular franchise like the *X-Men* to command big money, but those early 1960s Marvel super-hero first appearances are hardly the only hot Silver Age comics on the market. Marvel's announcement at San Diego Comic Con this summer of their upcoming *Guardians of the Galaxy* movie has sparked some major activity over *Guardians*-related firsts, including the first appearance of the original *Guardians of the Galaxy* team in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18. There was widespread discussion in the days after San Diego about whether this book would be a subject of collector focus, or if speculation would center around books starring the characters featured in the movie – which has been announced to include Rocket Raccoon, Gamora, Groot, Drax, and Star-Lord. And while early appearances of all of those characters are hot, it would appear that the first appearance of the brand itself is important also – *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 is currently selling quickly in all grades, slabbed or unslabbed, in auctions, cons, and stores. A CGC 9.6 copy went for $1800 early in the year (and it would go for much more as of this writing), and even a lower grade CGC 4.5 copy has topped $100 in recent weeks. Raw high grade copies in the VF to NM range have gone as high as $325-$500 and even G condition copies are fast movers on eBay at $35. If you want a copy of this book for your collection, it's probably best to grab one sooner

rather than later as we are 18 months from the opening of the film and peak *Guardians of the Galaxy* hype as of this writing. This has all the signs of becoming a major Silver Age key and certainly has plenty of room to grow in value.

The Bronze Age

Another Marvel movie announcement from this summer is driving Bronze Age comic book sales. As reported by Bleeding Cool's head film reporter Brendon Connelly from Hall H at San Diego Comic Con, director Edgar Wright held up a copy of *Marvel Premiere* #47 and told the audience that this was the Ant Man story he wanted to adapt for film. That's about as direct of a mainstream endorsement of a vintage back issue comic as you're ever going to see, and the market has reacted accordingly. *Marvel Premiere* #47 has rapidly gone from near-dollar-bin fodder to NM raw copies selling in the $100 range. The film has been scheduled

for November 2015 release, and it's going to be interesting to watch the bidding on any slabbed CGC 9.8 copies that hit the market between now and then. There is lots of upside on this one, it is still a cheap book in all grades.

Iron Man #55, the first appearance of Thanos, has also been on the move again since his *Avengers* movie cameo and rumors of likely upcoming film appearances started renewing desires for this book (and it doesn't hurt that the book is also the first appearance of *Guardians of the Galaxy's* Drax). There always seems to be plenty of copies of this book on the market, but that hasn't stopped it from opening some eyes in the months since the *Avengers* film hit, with someone recently hitting the Buy-It-Now on a CGC 9.8 white-paged copy for $4750. This book is pretty volatile on the current market though, as other CGC 9.8 copies have gone in the $3000-$3500 range recently as well. So, it might be worth doing some comparison shopping for the copy you want. And if you just want a nice looking raw copy in the VF range, those can be had for around $350-$400.

Guardians of the Galaxy and Thanos may also be leading a bit of a cosmic Silver and Bronze Age Marvel resurgence, and we'll have more on that development next time.

The Future of Vintage Paper

We've just turned the first page of the vintage paper we'll be talking about here in Bleeding Cool magazine. There's much more to talk about from the Gold, Silver, and Bronze ages, and you can help. If you'd like to contribute market data or reports or give feedback, contact us at vintagepaper@bleedingcool.com and let us know what you think about the present and future of vintage comics sales.

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HOLLYWOOD HIGHS & HOT COMICS

by Rich Johnston

It's a standard trope that movies don't affect the sales of comics, but I don't know if that's so true anymore. We may not get the level of Batmania of the late eighties, but the likes of Watchmen, Walking Dead and Scott Pilgrim did very well indeed as a result of their multimedia exposure. And it may well be spreading to the traditional superhero books too. Just the announcement that a movie or TV show exists has been setting markets ablaze.

Thief Of Thieves was probably one of the first comics this year to see its price quite so heightened by the announcement that there was a TV series in the offing, as speculators jockeyed to get in position for another *Walking Dead*-style leap in prices. And we've already seen a Season Three jump for those books too. Then the ending of *Avengers* saw older speculators go through their back issues for anything with Thanos in it, and cleaned up.

When *Guardians Of The Galaxy* was announced as the next new property to become a live action movie from Marvel Studios, their first appearance in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 made a jump as did Rocket Raccoon's first appearance in *Marvel Preview* #7. But more dramatic was the effect on the back issue bins for the eighties series by Jim Valentino, previously found in landfills or long forgotten back issue bins. Even the more recent series of the noughties has had a big boost.

Then there's the Disney animated movie of Marvel's largely forgotten *Big Hero 6*, pushing the sales of the original mini-series and *Alpha Flight* #17 out of the 25 cent bins and onto the wall. The expected elf element of Thor 2 seems to have given *Thor* #344 and its dark elves a bit of a boost, But the Warren Ellis/Adi Granov issues of *Iron Man* that look to form the plot of *Iron Man 3* have yet to receive any traction, selling at cover price or below. Room for growth on this one?

Just the possibility that Image's *Peter Panzerfaust* would be a BBC animated TV series has seen copies of the first issue jump to $40 and more.

But when is the best time to sell? When the movie or TV show comes out? It will always differ, but a general rule of thumb takes advantage of summer blockbuster advertising campaigns, saying that two weeks before the movie is released is an optimum time to put your items for sale... but for TV, its the week after the last episode has aired. Or in *The Walking Dead*'s case... never! Everything just keeps going up!

Also keep an eye on *Battle Scars* from last year. This six issue series featured the first appearances of Nick Fury Jr, now the Samuel Fury-lookalike of *SHIELD*.The first issue not only featured him, but also his soldier buddy Cheese. Who would, by the end of the series, be renamed Agent Coulson... who as we all now know lives, and will be a part of the *SHIELD* TV show.

BATJINKS

The Batman crossover Death Of The Family saw retailers selling masses of copies of *Batgirl* #13 to each other for $10, while the book has fetched over $30 in individual issues. Those die-cut mask covers clearly make a difference. But the real winner may be *Red Hood And The Outlaws* #13 without a mask but technically having more to do with the crossover than Batgirl. It's just no one remembered to mention it in solicitations or on the checklist. Seems there has been a bit of a rush on that one. Then there's the newstand versions of the die cut comics without the actual die cut... the trick there is to find them in near mint!

It's a lesson that people seem to eschew collecting a whole crossover... until about two days before the first issue is released.

FIVE TO WATCH

Revival by Tim Seeley and Mike Norton, with issue one and two selling for around $12 each on eBay. Seems to be going the way of Chew, Fatale and more along the speculators' G-Spot, also affecting the Free Comic Book Day issue. What isn't as widely known is that there was an entirely different print run of that free comic pulped over some trademark issues. And there are hardly any available copies on the market. But that would be the one, true, first appearance of *Revival*.

Nightwing #4... Why is this comic so hot, above and beyond its contemporaries? Some kind of scarcity of a Batbook mixed with Nightwing's general popularity, and a self perpetuating spiral of buying and selling have seen that issue and those around it, sell for quite unexpectedly high prices.

Justice League #12 is the best selling comic in August. Yet somehow, even after the subsequent prints, it's still not enough. People do love their kisses...

Bedlam #1, the new comic from Nick Spencer, looks like it may well be the next to go the way of *Morning Glories*, *Happy*, and others.

Deadpool Kills The Marvel Universe has held interest after its publication and it looks like the equally unlikely Space Punisher is going the same way. Could this be a new strain of grim'n'gritty'n'mickey-taking comics from Marvel? Is *Deadpool Illustrated* a sure-fire hit in the making?

PRICE GUIDE

for Collectors and Sellers

Retailers who would like to become part of an advisory board for the Price Guide feature should contact Rick Verbanas via email: *rickverbanas@bleedingcool.com*. Prices reflect raw, non-professionally-graded sales.

The NEW 52

Action Comics 1	$12
Animal Man 1	$23
Aquaman 1	$18
Aquaman 4	$25
Batman 1	$38
Batman 2	$10
Batman 3	$7
Batman 4	$20
Batman 5	$15
Batman 6	$7
Batman 7	$9
Batman And Robin 1	$11
Batman: The Dark Knight 1	$20
Batman: The Dark Knight 2	$14
Batman: The Dark Knight 3	$10
Batman: The Dark Knight 4	$15
Batman: The Dark Knight 5	$10
Batman: The Dark Knight 6	$7
Batwing 1	$15
Batwoman 1	$5
Detective Comics 1	$30
Earth 2 1	$10
FCBD New 52 0	$12
Flash 1	$10
Green Lantern 1	$10
Justice League 1	$20
Justice League 2	$6
Justice League 12	$25
Nightwing 1	$30
Nightwing 2	$5
Nightwing 3	$5
Nightwing 4	$32
Red Hood & The Outlaws 1	$25
Red Lanterns 1	$9
Suicide Squad 1	$25
Suicide Squad 6	$14
Suicide Squad 7	$10
Superboy 1	$12
Superman 1	$10
Teen Titans 1	$13
Wonder Woman 1	$13

Alan Moore Classics

A1 1	$13
A1 2	$10
AARGH	$15
Action Comics 583	$5
American Splendor 15	$15
Arken Sword 8	$150
Arken Sword 20	$90
Batman: The Killing Joke	$33
Big Numbers 1	$5
Big Numbers 2	$5
Bikini Confidential	$9
Brought To Light	$50
Captain Britain Omnibus	$175
Complete Bojeffries Saga	$40
Critters 23	$20
Daredevils 1	$47
Daredevils 7	$75
DC Comics Presents 85	$7
DC Spotlight 1	$40
From Hell 1	$25
From Hell 11	$9
From Hell Limited hardcover	$177
Glory Preview	$9
Kimota: Miracleman Companion 1	$50
Knockabout Trial Special 1	$21
League Black Dossier Record 1	$107
League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen Vol 1	$7
LoEG Vol 1 Absolute	$150
Maxwell The Magic Cat 1	$10
Maxwell The Magic Cat 2	$10
Maxwell The Magic Cat 3	$10
Miracleman 1	$10
Miracleman 2	$3
Miracleman 3	$3
Miracleman 4	$3
Miracleman 5	$9
Miracleman 6	$14
Miracleman 7	$15
Miracleman 8	$10
Miracleman 9	$11
Miracleman 10	$11
Miracleman 11	$30
Miracleman 12	$40
Miracleman 13	$18
Miracleman 14	$40
Miracleman 15	$215
Miracleman 16	$20
Miracleman Book 1	$58
Miracleman Book 2	$90
Miracleman Book 3	$135
Mustard	$36
Neonomicon 1	$8
Outbreak Of Violets 1	$1200
Promethea Poster	$190
Rip Off Comix 8	$21
Superman 423	$6
Superman Annual 11	$23
Swamp Thing 20	$45
Swamp Thing 21	$30
Swamp Thing 22	$15
Swamp Thing 23	$10
Swamp Thing 24	$16
Swamp Thing 25	$7
Swamp Thing 26	$6
Swamp Thing 27	$6
Swamp Thing 28	$6
Swamp Thing 29	$6
Swamp Thing 30	$5
Swamp Thing 31	$6

Alan Moore Classics (cont.)

Swamp Thing 32	$5
Swamp Thing 33	$5
Swamp Thing 34	$5
Swamp Thing 35	$6
Swamp Thing 36	$22
Swamp Thing 37	$50
Swamp Thing 38	$6
Swamp Thing 39	$6
Swamp Thing Annual 2	$8
Taboo 1	$3
Taboo 2	$10
Taboo 3	$15
Taboo 4	$40
Taboo 5	$40
Taboo 6	$25
Taboo 7	$40
The Birth Caul 1	$15
Unknown Quantities	$10
V For Vendetta 1	$20
V For Vendetta 2	$7
V For Vendetta 3	$7
Warrior 1	$17
Warrior 2	$25
Warrior 3	$3
Warrior 4	$11
Warrior 5	$20
Warrior 6	$8
Warrior 7	$20
Warrior 8	$8
Warrior 9	$8
Warrior 10	$8
Warrior 11	$8
Warrior 12	$8
Warrior 13	$8
Warrior 14	$8
Warrior 15	$5
Warrior 16	$5
Warrior 17	$5
Warrior 18	$5
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Warrior 20	$5
Warrior 21	$5
Warrior 22	$20
Warrior 23	$20
Warrior 24	$5
Warrior 25	$5
Warrior Summer Special	$6
Watchmen 1	$14
Watchmen 2	$15
Watchmen 3	$10
Watchmen 4	$9
Watchmen 5	$9
Watchmen 6	$10
Watchmen 7	$25
Watchmen 8	$20
Watchmen 9	$8
Watchmen 10	$10
Watchmen 11	$20
Watchmen 12	$20
Watchmen Absolute	$150

Image First Issues

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Alpha Girl	$10
Blood Red Dragon	$5
Butcher Baker	$5
Carbon Grey	$16
Chew	$410
Creator Owned Heroes	$10

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Dancer	$6
Danger Club	$16
Darkness	$52
Enormous	$30
Epic Kill	$12
Fatale	$30
Green Wake	$10
Harvest	$14
Heart	$5
Hell Yeah	$5
Hoax Hunters 0	$7
Invincible	$207
Last Mortal	$5
L'il Depressed Boy	$20
Manhattan Projects	$36
Mind The Gap	$12
Moriarty	$10
Morning Glories	$66
Mudman	$4
Nancy In Hell	$5
No Place Like Home	$10
Nonplayer	$22
Orc Stain	$10
Peter Panzerfaust	$130
Pigs	$4
Pilot Season: Hardcore	$10
Planetoid	$10
Revival	$16
Saga	$35
Sea Bear & Grizzly Shark	$5
Secret	$6
Secret Agent Poyo	$20
Severed	$10
Shadowhawk	$7
Skullkickers	$5
Spawn	$35
The Infinite Vacation	$6
The Strange Talent Of Luther Strode	$10
Thief Of Thieves	$80
Walking Dead	$1000
Wetworks	$3
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Witchblade	$20
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Retailer List

Being on the front line, so-to-speak, retailers know what fans are craving. Not only do fans want creative stories and fascinating characters, but they fiercely enjoy reading about the industry. When Bleeding Cool Magazine was first announced, the internet was buzzing with feedback. While online is great for fast-breaking news and short sound-bytes, it seems fans are seeking more in-depth coverage, more editorial, more interviews with top creators, more... comic book fan goodness! The following retailers recognize this and stocked up on our first issue. On behalf of all of us as Bleeding Cool, we would like to thank these retailers for helping us spread the joy of comics to their customers. And, if you get the chance, stop by and visit one of these stores and thank them for supporting the hobby by carrying Bleeding Cool Magazine...

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- All About Comics: Phoenix, AZ
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- Ian Justin Ranney: Bakersfield, CA
- Metropolis Comics: Bellflower, CA
- Fantastic Comics Llc: Berkley, CA
- Comic Madness: Chino, CA
- Comics Ink: Culver City, CA
- Super Heroes In Training: Escondido, CA
- Treasure Island Comics: Fremont, CA
- Heroes Comics & Cards: Fresno, CA
- I.E. Comics and Games: Hemet, CA
- Golden Apple I: Los Angeles, CA
- The Comic Bug: Manhattan Beach, CA
- Bonanza Books & Comics: Modesto, CA
- Comic Odyssey: National City, CA
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- Heroes and Villians Comics: Pleasanton, CA
- 4 Color Fantasies: Rancho Cucamong, CA
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- Rogue Comics: Bridgeport, CT
- The Comic Book Shop: Wilmington, DE
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- Read More Comics: Brandon, FL
- Tate's Comics: Lauderhill, FL
- Acme II: Longwood, FL
- Keimon, Inc.: Port St. Lucie, FL
- A Comic Shop: Winter Park, FL
- Oxford Comics, Inc.: Atlanta, GA
- Chimerical Entrprises, Llc: Smyrna, GA
- Dreamland Comics IV: Bartlett, IL
- Alley Cat Comics Llc: Chicago, IL
- Chicago Comics Inc: Chicago, IL
- G-Mart Comics: Chicago, IL
- Graham Crackers: Naperville, IL
- Beyond Tomorrow: Palatine, IL
- Comic Carnival Dba Comic Dist: Indianapolis, IN
- *Discount Comic Book Service: Fort Wayne, IN*
- Creative Comics: Griffith, IN
- Dee Puppy Comics: Indianapolis, IN
- Downtown Comics North: Indianapolis, IN
- Limited Edition Comics: Cedar Falls, IO
- Mayhem Collectibles: Des Moines, IO
- Prairie Dog Comics: Wichita, KS
- Comic Vault: Radcliff, KT
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- Newbury Comics, Inc.: Brighton, MA
- New England Comics: Brockton, MA
- Larry's Comics: Lowell, MA
- Harrison's Comics: Salem, MA
- Big Bens Comix: Allen Park, MI
- J R S Enterprises Inc: Canton, MI
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- Adventure Retail Limited, Inc: Roseville, MN
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- Mail Order Comics Inc: Gretna, NE
- Krypton Comics: Omaha, NE
- Alternate Reality Comics: Las Vegas, NV
- Comic Oasis Inc: Las Vegas, NV
- Velvet Underground Comics: Las Vegas, NV
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- Jetpack Comics: Rochester, NH
- Chris' Comic & Cards: Seabrook, NH

- Traders of Babylon Comics: Hoboken, NJ
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- Argosy Games Inc: Poughkeepsie, NY
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- M & M: San Antonio, TX
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- Black Cat Comics Inc: Salt Lake, UT
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- The Comic Stop: Redmond, WA
- Adventures Underground: Richland, WA
- Wicked Awesome Corp: Seattle, WA
- Powers Comics & Collectibles: Green Bay, WI
- Comic Alley Lake Geneva: Lake Geneva, WI
- The Westfield Company: Middleton, WI

Canada

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- Legends: Victoria, BC
- Comics America: Winnipeg, MB
- Stadium Comics: Brampton, ON
- Forbidden Realm Comics: Delhi, ON
- Heroes Cards & Comics: London, ON
- Red Nails II: North York, ON
- Silver Snail Inc: Toronto, ON
- The Beguiling: Toronto, ON
- Toronto Cartoonists Workshop I: Toronto, ON
- Distribution Universe: St Laurent, QC

United Kingdom

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- Excelsior Comics Limited: Bristol BS15 1XY
- *Forbidden Planet Int'l: G1 2LW*
- Gosh! The London Comic Shop: Soho, London
- Millennium Comics: Cheshire, CW9 5NT
- Nostalgia & Comics: Birmingham B5 4EN
- Orbital Comics Ltd: London, WC2H 7JA
- Paradox Comics 'N Stuff: Poole, Dorset Hh15 1AB
- Planet Ace Ltd T/A Ace Comics: Colchester, Essex
- The Toy Tardis: Plymouth, PL1 1NJ
- Whatever Comics: Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AT
- Worlds Apart: Liverpool L1 1JN

International

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BLEEDING COOL MAGAZINE #2

Don't miss out on the next issue of ***Bleeding Cool Magazine***, in stores this December!

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Next Issue

What time is it? It's *Bleeding Cool* Time! Join Fin, Jake, and Marceline as we celebrate *Adventure Time* and a giant stocking full of kids books for the holidays. This December, *Bleeding Cool Magazine* continues to give you what you can't get on the web – unique and relevant editorial, the hottest creators, the biggest events, and Rich Johnston's critical analysis of the things that drive our hobby. And this holiday season we are celebrating all-ages and kids comics from *Archie* to *TMNT* to *Looney Tunes* to *Adventure Time*, we've got it covered! We also focus on the New Year with a look at the books that will change 2013 and the creators that are making this a year like no other! Delivering over 100 pages per issue and a bi-monthly release schedule, you are not going to want to miss the behind-the-scenes scoops, hot book price guide, and hot book speculation. Over a million monthly BleedingCool.com visitors can't be wrong! Delivering the best of comics and film with the right mix of innovation, snark, and spell-checking, it's *Bleeding Cool!*

JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED

COVER BY
Whilce Portacio

written by Duane Swierczynski - art by Nelson Daniel

In this, Judge Dredd's 35th anniversary year, IDW is proud to re-introduce Judge Dredd to America in this all-new comic-book series.

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